

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

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Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



South Africa & Namibia: Cape Town's  
Winelands to the Skeleton Coast

2026

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Sossusvlei, Namibia

## New! South Africa & Namibia: Cape Town's Winelands to the Skeleton Coast Small Group Adventure

**South Africa:** Cape Town | **Namibia:** Windhoek, Sossusvlei, Swakopmund, Damaraland, Etosha National Park

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**18 days starting from \$9,695**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/nam2026pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/nam2026pricing)

Begin your adventure in South Africa's capital to explore Table Mountain, the Cape of Good Hope, and the lush valleys of the Cape Winelands before heading to Namibia—a place unlike anywhere else on Earth. Journey deep into the ancient Namib Desert—a vast barren landscape where desert elephants meander across fields of dunes and nomadic oryx traverse windswept ridges. Discover the mist-shrouded shores of the Skeleton Coast, explore ancient rock engravings of Twyfelfontein, enjoy safari game-viewing drives at Etosha—one of Africa's greatest wildlife reserves—and much more.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 16 nights' accommodation
- 40 meals—16 breakfasts, 13 lunches, and 11 dinners
- 23 small group activities, including game-viewing drives on 2 days
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Leader and driver-guides
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, lodge and camp staff, driver-guides, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next O.A.T. trip

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**South Africa & Namibia: Cape Town's Winelands to the Skeleton Coast**



## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Cape Town, South Africa
2-5	Cape Town
6	Fly to Windhoek, Namibia
7-8	Sossusvlei
9-11	Swakopmund
12-13	Damaraland
14-16	Etosha National Park
17	Windhoek
18	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

**Pacing:** 6 locations in 18 days with 2 one-night stays

**Physical Requirements:** Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, deep sand, stairs, and cobblestones

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 16-24 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/nam](http://www.oattravel.com/nam)

## SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Spend *A Day in the Life* of a village in Damaraland, Namibia. Plus, savor a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a local South African family in the Stellenbosch wine region.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** In Cape Town, get firsthand accounts of the legacy of the South African apartheid regime at the District Six Museum. In Swakopmund, engage in a **Controversial Topic** discussion about the extermination of native Herero and Nama people by German colonizers—considered the twentieth century’s first genocide.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**Botswana & Zimbabwe: Chobe National Park & Victoria Falls**  
**PRE-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,795**

**New! Madagascar: Tropical Rainforests & Ring-tailed Lemurs**  
**POST-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,995**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Johannesburg** before your Botswana & Zimbabwe pre-trip extension from **\$110** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Cape Town** before your main adventure from **\$120** per room, per night

# South Africa & Namibia: Cape Town's Winelands to the Skeleton Coast

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 6 nights in *Botswana & Zimbabwe: Chobe National Park & Victoria Falls*

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Johannesburg

**Day 3** Fly to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe  
• Overland to Chobe National Park, Botswana

**Day 4** Chobe National Park • Afternoon game-viewing drive • Sundowner boat cruise

**Day 5** Chobe National Park • Morning and afternoon game-viewing drives

**Day 6** Overland to Victoria Falls • Explore Victoria Falls

**Day 7** Victoria Falls • Optional Tours • Zambezi River Sundowner cruise

**Day 8** Fly to Cape Town, South Africa • Begin main trip

### **Day 1** Depart U.S.

Depart U.S. for your overnight flight to Cape Town, South Africa.

### **Day 2** Arrive Cape Town, South Africa

- Destination: Cape Town
- Accommodations: ANEW Hotel Green Point

**Afternoon:** Depending on your city of origin, your international flight may involve a stop in a European city prior to your arrival in Cape Town. Upon arrival, you'll be met at the airport and then transferred to your hotel, where you'll meet your fellow travelers, including those on our optional *Botswana & Zimbabwe: Chobe National Park & Victoria Falls* extension.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will recommend local dining options.

**Evening:** You'll most likely want to retire early to prepare for tomorrow's discoveries.

### **Day 3** Explore Cape Town • Visit Table Mountain

- Destination: Cape Town
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: ANEW Hotel Green Point or similar

**Activity Note:** Table Mountain Aerial Cableway closes for annual cable car maintenance each year, usually from mid-July to the end of August. If it is closed at the time of your scheduled visit, an alternate activity will be scheduled.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.



**Morning:** Following a Welcome Briefing and Orientation Walk, we'll set off on a city tour of the bustling South Africa capital. Our discoveries will include the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront. Named after Queen Victoria and her second son, Alfred, this bustling harbor has a maritime legacy that dates back more than 350 years. Still used by tugs and fishing boats, this picturesque waterfront area is now home to trendy restaurants, shops, and myriad other attractions spread over 300 acres.

Our tour will also include a visit to the District Six Museum, where we'll learn about the legacy of the South African apartheid regime. District Six had been a vibrant, mixed-race community in the heart of Cape Town, consisting of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, laborers, and immigrants. But on February 11, 1966 (under the Group Areas Act of 1950), the district was declared "white" and 66,000 non-whites were forcibly removed and their homes were bulldozed. Meant to be redeveloped for whites only, the area remained largely abandoned as a result of international pressure. We'll meet with a former resident of District Six during our visit to the museum which features exhibits and personal mementos from people who lived through the era of apartheid. We'll continue exploring Cape Town on our way to lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll head over to Table Mountain. Depending on wind conditions, we will travel by cable car up to the top of one of Cape Town's most dramatic natural landmarks. Weather permitting, we may enjoy views of the Atlantic Ocean, the bays, the city below, and the peninsula that meanders south to the Cape of Good Hope. Some 1,400 species of wild flowering plants grow on and around Table Mountain, which is also home to the unusual rock hyrax (often called dassies), rodent-like

creatures whose closest living relative is the elephant. Perhaps you'll see some during your walk around the mountaintop.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

**Evening:** You're free to spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

## **Day 4 Explore Cape Winelands • Home-Hosted Lunch**

- Destination: Cape Town
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: ANEW Hotel Green Point or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll travel to the lush valleys of the Cape Winelands, South Africa's largest winemaking region with grape cultivation dating back to the 1600s. Our destination is Pniel (pronounced "Pin-yel"), a quaint farming village surrounded by mountains, vineyards, and orchards. Pniel was originally established as a mission station in 1834 for recently freed slaves and remains a sleepy village of cottages and a single congregational church (built in 1843) that is shared by different denominations. Here, we'll split into smaller groups and visit several different homes for an opportunity to learn about everyday life in an intimate setting, along with some firsthand knowledge of the village's history. We'll also help to prepare a typical meal with our host family before joining them at the table for lunch.

**Lunch:** Enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with local families in Pniel.

**Afternoon:** After thanking our host families, we'll visit one of the many historic wine estates located in the renowned "Golden Triangle" of the Cape Winelands, including nearby

Stellenbosch. The winemaking tradition of this fertile region dates back more than 350 years when the first wine grapes were pressed in 1659. We'll enjoy a tour of the wine cellar, followed by a tasting before returning to our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for dining options in Cape Town.

**Evening:** You're free to explore Cape Town on your own, spend some time at the hotel's bar, or retire to your room.

### Day 5 Discover Cape Peninsula

- Destination: Cape Town
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: ANEW Hotel Green Point or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today's discoveries feature the Cape Peninsula, a scenic stretch of coastline jutting out into the Atlantic that is home to pristine beaches, towering cliffs, and lush forests. When we reach the tip of the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, we'll see Cape Point, the technical "Cape of Good Hope." Rapidly changing climatic conditions and the Indian Ocean currents coming from Cape Agulhas make this a particularly dangerous spot for ships.

We'll also stop at Boulders Beach, a rugged coastal area that is home to a large colony of African penguins.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, you'll have some free time to visit local shops or explore some of the tidal pools before we return to our hotel in Cape Town.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** You're free to enjoy the remainder of the evening as you wish. Or to retire early to get some rest tomorrow's flight to Windhoek, Namibia.

### Day 6 Fly to Windhoek, Namibia

- Destination: Windhoek
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Avani Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Cape Town this morning and head to the airport for our flight to Windhoek, Namibia.

**Lunch:** On your own—a light lunch will be served during your flight.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Windhoek, we'll check into our hotel. Then, we'll set off for a walking tour of Namibia's vibrant capital. Spread along a wide valley in the geographic center of the country, Windhoek is Namibia's largest (and some would say its *only*) city. Begun as a settlement by the Afrikaans-speaking Orlam people in 1840, it came under German Imperial rule in 1890—and would remain a German colony up until World War 1, when the British took over. Namibia finally achieved independence in 1990.

Tour highlights include Christuskirche, perhaps the most striking symbol of Windhoek's colonial past. Constructed in 1907 using local orange sandstone with white trim, the 500-seat German-Lutheran church was meant to symbolize the triumph of European colonists over the native cultures. Prominently located on traffic island in the heart of the city, it has emerged as a national icon and symbol of Windhoek. Windhoek is also home to an Independence Memorial Museum and Genocide Memorial, which we'll learn about later on our adventure.



**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** Spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

### Day 7 Overland to Sossusvlei

- Destination: Sossusvlei
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Namib Desert Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll depart Windhoek and head west into the Namib, the world's oldest desert, on our way to the dunes of the Sossusvlei. Along the way, we'll break up our journey with brief stop in the mining village of Klein Aub. We'll arrive at our lodge in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy the afternoon to relax at the lodge or begin exploring our surroundings on your own. Sossusvlei is a flat, dry clay pan in a corner of the Namib Desert encircled by sand dunes—magnificent towers of shifting red-orange sand covering thousands of square miles. Constantly twisted and shaped by the wind, the Sossusvlei dunes are among the highest in the world. Later, we'll gather together to enjoy a sundowner drive into the desert before returning to our lodge for dinner.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** You may wish to sit outside to take in the star-filled Namibian sky. Everything from the Milky Way and Magellanic Clouds to whichever planets are in the vicinity should be visible to the naked eye. With hardly any noise or light pollution, this region of the Namib Desert is designated a "dark sky reserve," which means it has one of the darkest skies measured on Earth.

### Day 8 Explore Sossusvlei Dunes & Deadvlei • Sesriem Canyon

- Destination: Sossusvlei
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Namib Desert Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** We'll have a 4:30am wake-up call this morning to watch the sunrise from the Sossusvlei sand dunes.

**Breakfast:** We'll have a light breakfast at the lodge before setting off into the Namib Desert.

**Early Morning:** We'll depart the lodge and head into Namib-Naukluft Park for an up-close visit to the dunes of Sossusvlei at sunrise. Over a picnic breakfast, we'll wait for dawn to break and watch as the sunlight bathes the seemingly endless sea of sand in hues of brilliant red and orange.

After watching this mesmerizing display of nature, we'll make our way to Deadvlei, an ancient white clay bed littered with the ghostly remains of hundreds of sun-blackened camel-thorn trees. One of the most hauntingly beautiful locales in all of Africa, Deadvlei was once a verdant oasis fed by the Tsauchab River that flowed through the desert. But some seven centuries ago, the trees perished after the encroaching dunes blocked the river flow. And with no humidity in the harsh desert environment for decomposition, the trees became fossilized—and still stand like skeletal sentinels against the stark backdrop of the Namib desert. After our visit, we'll return to our lodge for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, we'll enjoy an excursion to Sesriem Canyon, a narrow, half-mile-long gorge that plunges 100 feet, creating a sheer cliff of limestone and sand. Carved by the waters of the Tsauchab River

over 15 million years, Sesriem was a vital water source for early settlers, who would pull up buckets from the depths using six (*ses*) lengths of leather ropes (*riem*), giving rise to the canyon's name in Afrikaans—Sesriem.

Our visit will also offer a glimpse into the adaption of life in this harsh desert environment, as a remarkable variety of birds and wildlife make their home along this dramatic precipice, including falcons, Spotted eagle-owls, lizards, and jackals.

After exploring the canyon, we'll drive back to our lodge for time to freshen up for dinner.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

### **Day 9 Optional Sunrise Hot-Air Balloon Ride • Overland to Swakopmund**

- Destination: Swakopmund
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Swakopmund Hotel or similar

**Early Morning:** Travelers interested in adding a different perspective to their experiences may wish to rise extra early to join an optional hot-air balloon ride to witness the sunrise while you float high above the world's oldest and driest desert.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** We'll depart Sossusvlei later this morning and transfer to Swakopmund. We'll make a few stops along the way as we journey north through the Namib Desert to the coastal town of Swakopmund. First, we'll enjoy a light lunch in Solitaire, a remote settlement that has been a welcome desert stopover for more than 60 years. We may also stop for a bit at the Tropic of Capricorn. One of the five

major circles of latitude, Capricorn is the southernmost latitude where the sun can shine from directly overhead.

**Lunch:** In the remote settlement of Solitaire.

**Afternoon:** We should arrive at our hotel in Swakopmund late this afternoon.

Founded in 1892 as a main harbor during the German colonial era, Swakopmund resembles a romantic Bavarian village nestled between the desert and the misty sea. Infused with Old World charm, this enclave of picturesque, half-timbered homes is still home to the descendants of German settlers, together with an eclectic mix of fishermen, miners, and tribal Africans in traditional dress. There are plenty of charming cafés and restaurants for you to pop into at your whim for dinner on your own this evening.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to do as you wish or rest up for tomorrow's full day of discoveries.

### **Day 10 Swakopmund • Excursion to Sandwich Harbour**

- Destination: Swakopmund
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Swakopmund Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Following an orientation walk in the vicinity of our hotel, enjoy some time to explore independently. You may even wish to relax by the shore, as this is Namibia's main beach resort.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local dining options.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll regroup and board 4X4 vehicles for an excursion to Sandwich Harbour, a tidal lagoon about 30 miles south of Walvis Bay. Coveted for its natural deep-sea harbor, Walvis Bay fell under Dutch control in 1793 and was annexed by the British two years later. In 1910, Walvis Bay was ceded to the South African Union, where it remained until as recently as 1994. Once a center for the whaling industry, Walvis Bay is still an important fishing port, and the salt fields of this area produce 400,000 tons of high-quality salt annually.

We'll continue journeying along the Kuiseb riverbed to Sandwich Harbour, where giant sand dunes—some more than 300 feet high—can be seen plunging into the Atlantic before washing out into a natural tidal lagoon. If weather and tides permit, we'll drive out to the lagoon, which is one of Southern Africa's most important coastal wetland areas. We'll also stop at the Shawnee, a transport tug that ran aground in 1976. The combination of thick fog, rough seas, and unpredictable currents has been responsible for scores of shipwrecks along the so-called "Skeleton Coast." While the name may refer to bones of stranded whales, a similar fate awaited shipwrecked sailors who soon died of thirst along these inhospitable shores.

After making our way back to Swakopmund, the remainder of the day and evening are yours to relax or continue exploring independently.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Free to pursue individual interests or enjoy the amenities of our hotel.

## **Day 11 Explore the Skeleton Coast • Cape Cross Seal Reserve • Controversial Topic: The Namibian genocide • Township tour**

- Destination: Swakopmund
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Swakopmund Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, we'll set off to explore Namibia's Skeleton Coast—one of the most dangerous lengths of coastline in the world for unwary ships. The combination of thick fog, rough seas, and unpredictable currents has been responsible for an estimated 1,000 shipwrecks, most of them during the heyday of the mercantile era. It is aptly named, too, as the Skeleton Coast contains not just the skeletal remains of shipwrecks, seals, and stranded whales, but those of shipwrecked sailors who soon died of thirst along these inhospitable shores—which is why early Portuguese sailors named it *As Areias do Inferno*, or "The Sands of Hell." Namibian Bushmen knew to avoid this area as well, calling it "The Land God Made in Anger."

Our discoveries will also include a visit to Cape Cross, home to a breeding colony of more than 100,000 Cape fur seals, which can be seen basking in the sand or playing in the surf.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in the fishing town of Henties Bay.

**Afternoon:** After returning to Swakopmund, we'll head over to the Swakopmund Genocide Museum, where we'll engage in a **Controversial Topic** discussion about the Namibian genocide—an event little known even to this day. It began in 1904 when native Herero and Nama people rose up to protest colonial rule following German seizures of their land and cattle. In response to the rebellion, the head of German military administration called for the



extermination of the local population. German troops would go on to kill some 65,000 Herero (out of a population of 80,000) and 10,000 Nama (about half the population) in what is considered the 20th century's first genocide. It wasn't until 2021 that Germany officially acknowledged committing genocide during its colonial occupation of Namibia. Our discussion will also consider whether the victims are benefitting from Germany's ongoing reparations.

After our visit, we'll begin a walking tour of Mondesa township, a previously segregated suburb of Swakopmund. While townships like Mondesa were formed during the past of apartheid, they have blossomed into thriving communities of diversity—a melting pot of Owambo, Damara, Nama and Herero people. Then, after returning to our hotel, the remainder of your day is free.

**Dinner:** On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend one of many fine restaurants located near the hotel.

**Evening:** Enjoy your evening as you wish.

### **Day 12 Overland to Damaraland • Visit Twyfelfontein**

- Destination: Damaraland
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Twyfelfontein Country Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our overland journey to Damaraland, a vast and untamed wilderness area sprawled along the eastern fringe of the Skeleton Coast, just south of Etosha National Park. Perhaps Namibia's most visually spectacular region, Damara's landscapes range from wide open sandy plains and granite hills to red-hued mountains, craggy canyons, and ancient petrified forests. Desert-dwelling

elephant, rare black rhino, and banded zebra roam freely in Damaraland, along predators such as wild-maned lion and spotted brown hyena. We'll arrive at our lodge in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After some time to freshen up, we'll regroup to explore Twyfelfontein, an open-air gallery of ancient rock engravings—and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here on the red sandstone are more than 2,500 rock carvings, mostly of African wildlife, some even pointing out how to find water. Sections of the vast series of petroglyphs date to the early Stone Age and are one of the largest concentrations of prehistoric art in all of Africa.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Enjoy your evening as you wish, perhaps just sitting outside and taking in the views of the Huab Valley.

### **Day 13 Damaraland • *A Day in the Life* of a Damaraland community**

- Destination: Damaraland
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Twyfelfontein Country Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our *A Day in the Life* of a Damaraland community with a drive to the small, rustic town of Khorixas to visit a local primary school in the area. After our school visit, we'll learn much more about the lives of the people of this region. The area surrounding Khorixas was once the capital of the Damaraland Bantustan and most of its current residents—just like at the school—are from the Damara ethnic group. Depending on tribal schedules, we will either be visiting one of the local Himba or Damara tribal communities,

where we'll learn about their traditions and culture, along with enjoying samples of their traditional foods. Then, we'll return to our lodge for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** You'll have free time to relax or explore on your own this afternoon.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Enjoy relaxing at the lodge or go outside to take in the tranquil surroundings.

### **Day 14 Overland to Etosha National Park • Visit Petrified Forest**

- Destination: Etosha National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Etosha Safari Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll journey overland to Etosha National Park today, with stops along the way. First, we'll visit Petrified Forest, home to hundreds of enormous tree trunks that were fossilized about 280 million years ago. Although technically not a "forest," scientists discovered that the trees didn't grow here but arrived after having been washed down a river in ancient times. There are also fine specimens of *Welwitschia mirabilis* plants in the area. While they typically grow a good distance apart from each other, there is an entangled 500-year-old male and female *Welwitschia* here—which the locals call the Namibian *Romeo and Juliet*.

Then, we'll stop at Vingerklip, a remarkable 115-foot-tall pillar of sandstone rock balanced precariously on a hilltop in the Ugab Terraces Valley. We'll enjoy further views of the dramatic rock formation when we stop for lunch at a lodge overlooking Vingerklip.

**Lunch:** At Vingerklip Lodge.

**Afternoon:** We should arrive at our lodge in Etosha National Park just before dinner.

**Dinner:** At our lodge.

**Evening:** Enjoy a drink at the bar or retire early for tomorrow's discoveries in Etosha.

### **Day 15 Etosha National Park • Morning bush walk • Afternoon game-viewing drive**

- Destination: Etosha National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Etosha Safari Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** A light breakfast will be served at the lodge early this morning.

**Morning:** We devote the next two days to exploring Etosha National Park, one of the world's greatest wildlife reserves. Etosha loosely translates as "great white place of dry water," as it consists of a vast shallow bowl of silvery sand surrounded by savannah plains that would seem to forbid life. But Etosha was aptly named, because along with shimmering mirages there are dozens of underground springs. And where there's water—even in a harsh desert—wildlife will seek it out. And they come to Etosha's waterholes not by ones and twos, but by the hundreds.

Our discoveries begin with an intimate bush walk in Etosha. We'll tread along the same paths where animals roam free and immerse ourselves in the untouched nature while observing the wildlife from a careful distance. After our walk, we'll return to the lodge for some time to relax before lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll take our first game-viewing drive into Etosha. The park is a haven to a diverse array of wildlife—an

untamed wilderness of some 114 mammal and 340 bird species. Scattered through the park's vast grassland and savannah are natural springs and permanent waterholes where animals congregate at various times of day—often several species at the same time. Every drive is different, of course, but we'll keep our eyes peeled for wildebeest, zebra, giraffe, rhino, jackal, and kudu—and with a little luck, lion, leopard, and cheetah.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Spend some time relaxing on your veranda or retire early for tomorrow's full-day game viewing.

### **Day 16 Etosha National Park • Full day game-viewing drive**

- Destination: Etosha National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Etosha Safari Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** A light breakfast will be served at the lodge early this morning.

**Morning:** We'll depart early in morning for a full day of game-viewing in Etosha. You never know what to expect, but it would be lovely to experience a day like American trader G. McKeirnan, who exclaimed, "*All the menageries in the world turned loose would not compare to the sight I saw that day,*" when he first laid eyes on the Etosha region in 1876.

**Lunch:** We'll enjoy a packed lunch in Etosha.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue our game-viewing drive after lunch. Just as fascinating as the wildlife is the landscape of Etosha. The salty central pan rolls away toward grassy savannahs, and surrounding it are starkly beautiful stands of acacia, mopani, and

moringa trees. Admire their spiky thorns, gnarled trunks, and outstretched branches silhouetted against the vast African sky.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish on our final night in Etosha.

### **Day 17 Overland to Windhoek**

- Destination: Windhoek
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Avani Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** A light breakfast will be served at the lodge early this morning.

**Morning:** We'll depart Damaraland this morning and make our way back to Windhoek for our final night in Namibia. Along the way, we'll stop for lunch in Okahandja. Situated about 40 miles north of Windhoek, Okahandja is known as the "Garden Town of Namibia." If you're thinking about last-minute keepsakes, the town is also known for its quality wood carvings—giraffes, hippos, tribal heads, bowls, and more.

**Lunch:** At a restaurant in Okahandja.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival at our hotel in Windhoek this afternoon, you'll have some time to settle in and freshen up for our final dinner in Namibia.

**Dinner:** This evening we'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a restaurant in Windhoek.

**Evening:** Extend your evening in Windhoek or begin packing for tomorrow's flights.

### **Day 18 Return to U.S. or begin your optional trip extension**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.



**Morning:** Head to the airport for your return flights to the U.S. via Johannesburg or to begin your optional *Madagascar: Tropical Rainforests & Ring-tailed Lemurs* post-trip extension.

## **END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION**

### **6 nights in *Madagascar: Tropical Rainforests & Ring-tailed Lemurs***

**Day 1** Fly to Antananarivo, Madagascar

**Day 2** Explore Antananarivo • Discover Ambohimanga • Visit Analakely Market

**Day 3** Overland to Andasibe

**Day 4** Perinet Reserve nature walk • Visit Mutsonjo Reforestation Project

**Day 5** Explore Mantadia National Park • Picnic lunch at a sacred waterfall

**Day 6** Visit the Amphibian Survival Assurance Center • Explore Lemur Island

**Day 7** Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### Sunrise Hot-Air Balloon Safari

(Day 9 \$685 per person)

Early risers may wish to join an optional hot-air balloon ride that soars above the vast Sossusvlei at sunrise. At the centerpiece of this optional tour is a ride over the Sesriem Canyon, a narrow, half-mile-long gorge that plunges 100 feet, creating a sheer cliff of limestone and sand. A remarkable variety of birds and wildlife make their home along this dramatic precipice, including falcons, Spotted eagle-owls, lizards, and jackals.

Travelers are required to depart from our lodge at least one half hour before sunrise. The flight itself lasts for approximately one hour and concludes with a celebratory Champagne breakfast at the landing site.

*This tour must be pre-booked at least 30 days prior to departure. This tour is dependent on wind conditions.*

## PRE-TRIP

### Botswana & Zimbabwe: Chobe National Park & Victoria Falls

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 6 nights accommodation
- » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for your local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Discover Africa's magnificent wildlife during a bush walk, boat cruise, and game-viewing drives in Botswana's Chobe National Park, home to some of the largest elephant herds on the continent. Then, cross over into Zimbabwe to witness Victoria Falls, the largest curtain of water on Earth and one of the world's Seven Natural Wonders.*

##### **Day 1 Depart U.S.**

Depart the U.S. for your overnight flight to Johannesburg, South Africa

##### **Day 2 Arrive in Johannesburg**

- Destination: Johannesburg
- Accommodations: ANEW Hotel OR Tambo or similar

**Afternoon/Evening:** Upon arrival in Johannesburg late this afternoon, an O.A.T. representative will assist with the transfer to your hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own. You may wish to dine at the hotel's restaurant.

##### **Day 3 Fly to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

##### **• Overland to Chobe National Park, Botswana**

- Destination: Chobe National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Fly to Victoria Falls this morning.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Victoria Falls, we'll transfer to our lodge in Chobe National Park. Then, we'll enjoy a sundowner in the bush before returning to our lodge for dinner.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Enjoy the evening as you wish. Or retire early to prepare for our full day of discoveries in Chobe tomorrow.



#### **Day 4 Chobe National Park • Afternoon game-viewing drive • Sundowner boat cruise**

- Destination: Chobe National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast you may elect to enjoy a village tour or a guided bush walk in the floodplain near our lodge.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** Set off on an exciting game-viewing drive of Chobe National Park, one of Africa's greatest wildlife parks. Botswana's second-largest (and first-established) national park, Chobe is home to tens of thousands of elephants—some of the largest elephant herds in all of Africa. This enormous region offers variety in both wildlife and terrain. Riverine forest, flood plains, and mopane are home to large and small game. Elephants gather around baobab trees, drawn by the water stored in their bark.

Large groups of giraffe amble about the land, and hyena, cheetah, leopard, and wildebeest may also be glimpsed in this thickly populated habitat. The birdlife here is diverse, ranging from eagles and bustards to plovers and rollers, and bee-eaters bustle near their sandbank nests. There are also water birds, such as egret, ibis, and heron, along the river.

Later in the afternoon, we'll enjoy a more relaxing view of Chobe's wildlife during a sunset boat cruise along the Chobe River. We should be able to see elephants as they swim across the river onto Sedudu Island, hippos and crocodiles in the water, and wildlife grazing in the distance—all while taking in a beautiful sunset.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Relax with a cocktail at the bar or retire to your room.

#### **Day 5 Chobe National Park • Morning and afternoon game-viewing drives**

- Destination: Chobe National Park
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, set off on a game-viewing drive to spot some of Chobe's elephants, in addition to zebra, Cape buffalo, hippo, and crocodile.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After some free time to relax or explore independently, we'll board our safari vehicles for more game-viewing, relying on the expert tracking skills of our driver guides and Trip Experience Leader.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Enjoy your final night in Chobe as you wish or begin packing for tomorrow's transfer to Victoria Falls.

#### **Day 6 Overland to Victoria Falls • Explore Victoria Falls**

- Destination: Victoria Falls
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Cresta Sprayview Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive across the border to Zimbabwe to Victoria Falls. Upon arrival, we'll set off on a 2-hour walking tour of the largest curtain of water in the world and one of the world's Seven Natural Wonders.

We'll discover walking trails and lookout points—each with different views. There are five main cataracts, including the most dramatic, the Main Falls and Devil's Cataract. These cataracts, whose African name (Mosi-oa Tunya) means “the smoke that thunders,” are nearly twice as high as Niagara, one and a half times as wide, and generate three times as much water. On a clear day, you can see the mist sprayed into the air from these crashing waters from more than 50 miles away. At peak flood times, 1.4 billion gallons of water per minute pass over its edge. The flora around the Falls is naturally profuse: You'll see ebony, fig trees, and many flowering species. The rain forest surrounding the Falls is particularly lush, fed by the Falls' perpetual spray.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After checking in to our rooms, we'll enjoy an orientation walk of the area with your Trip Experience Leader, followed by time to explore on your own.

**Dinner:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend some local dining options.

**Evening:** Enjoy this evening to do as you wish.

### **Day 7 Victoria Falls • Optional Tours • Zambezi River Sundowner cruise**

- Destination: Victoria Falls
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Cresta Sprayview Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, you'll have most of the day free to pursue individual interests in Victoria Falls. Or, you may choose to join one of our optional tours. On our *Eye of an Elephant* tour, you'll visit Shearwater Victoria Falls Private Game Reserve to observe and

lightly interact with these creatures. Or, on our optional *Flight of Angels* tour, you can enjoy a helicopter ride over Victoria Falls for stunning views of the iconic “smoke that thunders.” We also offer an extended helicopter ride over Victoria Falls that features a scenic visit to Batoka Gorge. Your Trip Experience Leader will facilitate reservations for travelers who would like to take any of the Optional Tours.

**Lunch:** On your own.

**Afternoon:** Later this afternoon, we'll regroup for a sundowner cruise along the Zambezi River.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Spend the evening as you wish.

### **Day 8 Fly to Cape Town, South Africa • Begin main trip**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Following breakfast, you'll have a couple of hours to do any last-minute shopping before we head to the airport for our afternoon flight to Cape Town, where we'll begin our main adventure.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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### ***Eye of an Elephant***

(Day 7 \$103 per person)

Take advantage of this opportunity to immerse yourself in the world of an elephant at Shearwater Victoria Falls Private Game Reserve. You can observe, and lightly interact with, the beautiful creatures and discover their unique personalities. We'll also enjoy discussions with the elephant carers about the organization's conservation efforts, as well as their plans to rehabilitate and release the elephants back into the wild.

***Please Note:*** This optional tour is pre-sold only and must be reserved at least 30 days prior to departure.

### ***Flight of Angels***

(Day 7 \$165 per person)

Join us for a flight over Victoria Falls, and appreciate the "smoke that thunders" from a whole new angle. Aboard a four- or six-passenger helicopter, your experienced pilot will treat you to a bird's-eye view of majestic Victoria Falls, the wide Zambezi River, and the zigzag-shaped gorges below. This is the best way to see such vast, impressive landscapes—as Dr. David Livingstone said himself, the falls are "so lovely they must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight."

***Please note:*** There is a national park fee of U.S. \$15 in addition to the price of this tour.

### ***Scenic Gorge Helicopter Ride***

(Day 7 \$225 per person)

Embark on an extended journey over Victoria Falls with a scenic flight that also features Batoka Gorge, a breathtakingly beautiful gorge

carved by the Zambezi River. This 22-minute helicopter ride begins with a view of the grandeur of Victoria Falls before taking you along through the zig-zagging series of gorges along the Zambezi River and hovering over Batoka Gorge. Then, on the return trip, you'll have another view of Victoria Falls before returning to your hotel.



## POST-TRIP

### *Madagascar: Tropical Rainforests & Ring-tailed Lemurs*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| » Airfare from Johannesburg to Antananarivo       | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader         |
| » 6 nights accommodation                          | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 16 meals—6 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 5 dinners | » All transfers   |
| » 8 small group activities                        |   |

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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##### **Day 1 Fly to Antananarivo, Madagascar**

- Destination: Antananarivo
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Colbert or similar

**Activity Note:** The flight to Antananarivo is approximately three hours. One hour is lost due to the time change.

**Morning:** We'll depart for the airport this morning, where we'll board a flight to Antananarivo, Madagascar—or “Tana,” as it's referred to by locals. Boasting a population of about 1.2 million, the capital city of Tana has been the epicenter of Malagasy power for three centuries. The unique fusion of cultures characteristic to the island stems from both its geographical isolation and patchwork of colonization from residents of Europe, the Sunda Islands and East Africa. Today, Tana is the beating heart of Madagascar, brimming with colorful markets, noteworthy restaurants, striking colonial architecture, and a complex history.

**Lunch:** On your own in transit.

**Afternoon:** Upon landing in Tana, you'll be met by your Trip Experience Leader and transfer to the hotel.

Enjoy the freedom to explore on your own this afternoon, or rest at the hotel. Shortly before dinner, our group will reconvene at the hotel, where we'll have a Welcome Briefing.

**Dinner:** At the hotel.

**Evening:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

##### **Day 2 Explore Antananarivo • Discover Ambohimanga • Visit Analakely Market**

- Destination: Antananarivo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Colbert or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our discoveries today with a tour of Tana's historic upper town, which is comprised of the Antaninarenina and Isoraka districts. Here, we'll explore sights such as the 17th-century Queen's Palace, the

19th-century railway station, and a diversity of colonial-style houses, cathedrals, and palatial residences.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon we'll venture to the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga, a UNESCO-listed city and burial site. This sacred landmark is a place of worship that represents centuries of cultural and spiritual traditions for the Malagasy people, as well as the ancestral home of the Merina kings and queens who once united the island. It is, therefore, viewed as the cradle of the kingdom and hosts a variety of venerated tombs, holy basins, and sacrificial stones. During our visit, we'll navigate the series of fortifications and sites that make up Ambohimanga in the company of a local guide who can illustrate their history.

Later, we'll depart for Analakely Market, one of the world's largest open-air markets. Locals come here for all of their shopping needs—from handmade clothing to fresh seafood and coveted spices. As you walk from stall to stall, you might smell the rich, intoxicating aroma of *ylang-ylang* plants, or notice the numerous vendors selling marijuana (a legal substance commonly enjoyed by residents). Of course, you'll also meet many locals selling vanilla, as Madagascar is one of the world's leading producers of the spice.

Following our market visit, we'll depart for our hotel.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Free to explore on your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

### Day 3 Overland to Andasibe

- Destination: Andasibe
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mantadia Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** The road transfer to Andasibe is approximately 4 hours.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** This morning we'll say goodbye to Tana and depart for Andasibe. Our journey will take us through rural Madagascar—deep into the lush, green highlands and past traditional villages and sprawling rice paddy fields. Along the way, we'll stop to stretch our legs and buy some seasonal produce from a roadside vendor. Perhaps we'll come away with some juicy jackfruit or a sweet-smelling pineapple before continuing on our winding journey. We'll arrive at our lodge in time for lunch.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy the afternoon to relax or begin exploring on your own.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

### Day 4 Perinet Reserve nature walk • Visit Mutsonjo Reforestation Project

- Destination: Andasibe
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mantadia Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's discoveries require approximately 2 miles of walking on hilly, sometimes moist terrain.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Today we'll kick off our nature discoveries in Madagascar. Referred to by ecologists as the "eighth continent,"

Madagascar is home to a dizzying array of flora and fauna found only on the island—a whopping 90% is believed to be endemic. To put this into even greater perspective, 5% of the world's plant and animal species are found here and here alone. This distinctive biodiversity can be traced back to the prehistoric separation of landmasses, ultimately breaking Madagascar and India apart 88 million years ago and leaving plants and animals to evolve in relative isolation. Every year, ecologists learn more about the island's natural offerings—in fact, what is believed to be the smallest reptile on earth—the *Brookesia nana* (or nano-chameleon)—was only discovered here in 2021.

Following breakfast, we'll depart for the Perinet Reserve, a dense and verdant area home to a sizeable population of one of Madagascar's most celebrated inhabitants: lemurs. In this particular part of the island, we'll find roughly 13 of the 100 species of lemur, including the indri, which are among the largest of their kind. Other notable animals we may encounter are the enormous Parson's chameleon, paradise catchers, the Madagascar falcon, and hundreds of species of native frogs. You'll also have a chance to witness dazzling flora, such as the Ravenala palm, a massive plant outfitted with paddle-shaped leaves in the form of a fan.

**Lunch:** At the lodge.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll depart for Mutsonjo, a local non-governmental organization focused on reforestation, conservation, and community education. Relative to the size of the island, Madagascar's national parks are quite small, with one of the primary reasons being unsustainable deforestation. Of the 28 million people who call the island home, the vast majority live in abject poverty—a significant portion of which rely solely on income generated from selling wood

or slash-and-burn agriculture. To put this level of deforestation into context, approximately 44% of Madagascar's forests were lost just in the last sixty years. We'll glean insight into this growing imbalance when we get an introduction to Mustonjo from a local guide. We'll also learn what's being done to combat the issue and educate the public.

Following our discussion, our local guide will lead us to an outdoor area where our group can contribute to the cause by planting a tree. This is a unique opportunity to have a personal impact, as well as further learn about reforestation methods and ask any questions we may have.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** Your evening is free to do as you wish.

## **Day 5 Explore Mantadia National Park • Picnic lunch at a sacred waterfall**

- Destination: Andasibe
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mantadia Lodge or similar

**Activity Note:** Today's discoveries require approximately 2 miles of walking on hilly, sometimes moist terrain.

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** After breakfast, we'll drive to Mantadia National Park, a nearly 60-square-mile protected area. The park is home to roughly eleven lemur species, including the indri and black-and-white ruffed lemur, and the landscape features numerous waterfalls and a diversity of altitudes. Upon arrival, we'll embark on an approximately 2-mile walk through some of the lesser visited parts of the reserve. Our walk will culminate at a sacred waterfall in Mantadia National Park,

where we'll stop for a picnic lunch and learn about the site itself, including the on-site burial ground marked by wood-carved tombstones.

**Lunch:** At the waterfall.

**Afternoon:** We'll head back to the lodge this afternoon, where we'll have some personal time to explore on our own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for activity ideas.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** On your own.

## **Day 6 Visit the Amphibian Survival Assurance Center • Explore Lemur Island**

- Destination: Andasibe
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Mantadia Lodge or similar

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Madagascar is home to nearly 300 native species of frogs—a staggering number of which are endangered. This morning, we'll depart for the Amphibian Survival Assurance Center of Andasibe to learn about the different species, as well as their plight. Frogs are actually the only amphibians found in Madagascar, which means they play a rather unique role in the overall ecosystem. From tree frogs to the tomato and mantella frogs, Malagasy amphibian populations are suffering due to rapid deforestation and ongoing threats from the ever-growing international pet trade. Mantella frogs, in particular, are subject to trafficking due to their attractive coloring.

During our visit at the center, we'll encounter a number of native species, see how they're rehabilitated, and learn what is being done to save them. Afterward, we'll depart for the lodge.

**Lunch:** At the lodge, featuring regional cuisine.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll head to Lemur Island, a small sanctuary situated in the middle of a river and home to lemurs rescued from captivity. Upon arrival, a local guide will introduce us to the island and its history on a short walk, during which we'll also have the opportunity to observe some of the common brown lemurs, bamboo lemurs, and black-and-white ruffed lemurs at close proximity. These habituated animals wouldn't survive in the wild; however, as we'll learn, Lemur Island is not without controversy. Visitors commonly pose for photos and physically interact with the lemurs. Conservationists allege that these conditions are unnatural and therefore immoral, but sanctuary advocates argue that the lemurs would otherwise be euthanized. Take the opportunity to learn both sides of this issue, and feel free to ask your local guide any questions you may have.

Later, we'll head back to the lodge, where we'll have free time to explore on our own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for activity suggestions.

**Dinner:** At the lodge.

**Evening:** The remainder of the evening is free for your own discoveries, or perhaps you'll rest before your journey onward tomorrow.

## **Day 7 Return to U.S.**

- Destination: Johannesburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the lodge.

**Morning:** Transfer overland to Antananarivo, where you'll board your international overnight flights back to the U.S.



# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking the main trip without any extensions, you will need a total of 5 blank passport pages. For South Africa, you need 2 consecutive pages front and back for each entry (four pages total), even though these pages may still be blank by the end of the trip.
- **Pre-trip extension to Chobe National Park and Victoria Falls:** You will need 4 additional pages, for entry into Botswana and Zimbabwe, a total of 9 blank pages.
- **Post-trip extension to Madagascar:** You will need 2 additional pages, for a total of 7 blank pages.

*Please note: You might not use all of these pages on your adventure (when you return, some may still be blank) but local officials will want to see that you have them.*

## Visas Required

We’ll be sending you a detailed **Visa Packet with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure**. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. *This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.*

- **South Africa: No visa required.**

- **Namibia: Visa required.** You can obtain this visa in advance or upon arrival.
- **Zimbabwe: Visa required.** You will need a double-entry visa that you will obtain upon arrival.
- **Madagascar: Visa required.** This visa can be purchased upon arrival.

### Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

### Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

### Travel Protection Required:

For new bookings starting 1/1/25, Overseas Adventure Travel requires all travelers purchase travel protection with Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000, due to the remote nature of your adventure.

### O.A.T. Travel Protection:

If you **purchase your Travel Protection Plan** through O.A.T., no further action will be needed, as the Medical Evacuation coverage and Medical Expense coverage meets these requirements.

### Your Own Travel Protection:

If you purchase your own travel protection, we recommend you review the plan to ensure Medical Evacuation coverage of at least \$200,000 and Medical Expense coverage of at least \$50,000 is included. Once you confirm your plan meets the requirements, you will need to email the following information to **[TravelCoverage@oattravel.com](mailto:TravelCoverage@oattravel.com)**:

- Traveler Name(s)
- Reservation Number
- Trip Protection Provider
- Policy Number
- Date of Purchase
- Copy of your Policy Documents

You can also contact our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814** to review this policy. You will be required to provide proof of coverage by 60 days prior to departure at the latest.

### **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

### **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### PACING

- 6 locations in 18 days with 2 one-night stays
- Air travel time will be 16–24 hours and will most likely have two connections
- 1 internal flight of 3 hours

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted on rough terrain and participate in 6–8 hours of physical activities each day
- This trip takes you to remote places with no medical facilities nearby
- Balance and agility are required for boarding 4x4 vehicles
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- Travelers in need of a CPAP machine may only bring one that runs on rechargeable batteries
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones
- Travel on roads in poor condition and on unpaved trails that can cause problems for travelers with leg or back issue
- We'll walk through deep sand during our exploration of the Sossusvlei Dunes



- During game-viewing excursions, we'll travel over bumpy, dusty terrain and occasionally go off-roading in the bush, as well as walk on sandy, uneven terrain at our camps

## CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 62–80°F during touring season
- December–March are the warmest months
- Namibia is mainly desert and generally humidity levels are low. Climate is typical of semi-desert terrain: hot days and cool nights. Summer is from October–April
- Inland temperatures between May–September can be 60–100°F during the day, and as low as 32°F at night
- Outside of the desert, November–March is humid with localized rain and thunderstorms
- Coastal temperatures are cooler and tend to range between 55–70°F

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

**At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip.** The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

**But if your itinerary differs from ours, then you may need a yellow fever vaccination.** (For example, if you will be traveling independently in Africa before/after your trip with us. Or if you will be arriving in South Africa from/connecting through a country other than the U.S. or Canada.) In this case, check with the CDC because you may need a yellow fever vaccination.

### Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

- Motion sickness medicine, if you are susceptible (the roads are very bumpy).
- Anti-malaria medication. Check with the CDC and your doctor first because these medications can have strong side effects.

## Prevention of Malaria

At time of writing, the CDC suggested anti-malarial medication for some parts of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. But since there are a range of anti-malarial medications, and some can have strong side effects, we suggest that you speak with your doctor. He or she might feel that medication isn't even needed for the main trip since you will only spend a few days in places where malaria is known to be present (Chobe National Park, Victoria Falls). Please consult with your doctor as they might advise you against anti-malarial medications, depending on what other medications you are taking and your general health.

Other than medication, the most important steps you can take to prevent malaria are to use insect repellent (preferably containing DEET at 30–35% strength) on exposed skin and on your clothing to prevent mosquito bites. If temperatures allow, you can also wear clothing that keeps your arms and legs covered.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying

- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## **Allergies**

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## **Water**

- Tap water is usually safe to drink in South Africa and Namibia, but always use caution.
- In Zimbabwe, the tap water is only safe to drink at your hotel in Victoria Falls. When you are away from your hotel, you should drink bottled water only.
- In Madagascar, we recommend you only drink bottled or treated water.
- You can bring a reusable water bottle to fill at the hotel for day excursions or bottled water is readily available for purchase.
- At most hotels it is safe to use ice in your drinks, but check with your Trip Experience Leader first

## **Food**

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals, and food at these establishments is generally as safe as in restaurants in the U.S.
- When dining out on your own, watch what you eat. Stay away from ice, uncooked food, and non-pasteurized milk and milk products.

## **CPAP Machines**

In order to be prepared for occasional power outages, travelers who rely on a CPAP machine must bring one that runs on rechargeable batteries.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **We recommend that you get some South African rand before you leave home.** It doesn't need to be a lot—just enough to cover a couple of days, in case the bank is closed when you arrive or the ATM at the airport is down.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**South Africa:** South Africa Rand (R)

**Namibia:** Namibian Dollar (NAD). The South African Rand (ZAR) is also accepted as currency in Namibia

**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe has recently brought back the Zimbabwean dollar (Z\$) and announced plans to restrict foreign currency. However, you will still be able to pay for many purchases in U.S. dollars (\$).

**Botswana:** Botswanan Pula (P)

**Madagascar:** Malagasy Ariary (AR)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead. However, we recommend that you arrive with some South African rands (just in case)—especially if you are taking the pre-trip extension, as you may not be able to exchange money for a few days after arrival.

During the trip, the easiest way to get rands is to use a local ATM (your bank at home will convert and charge you in U.S. dollars). You can also exchange cash at some hotels and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.



## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

**Namibia:** ATMs are typically found in larger cities, such as Windhoek. In the bush, there is no access to ATMs. Local ATMs may only accept cards from local banks and usually will not allow cash advances on credit cards; therefore it is best to bring a cash reserve large enough to pay for most expenses. The South African Rand (ZAR) is accepted everywhere in Namibia and is used on a 1:1 exchange rate. Namibian Dollars (NAD) are not easy to exchange outside of Namibia.

**Zimbabwe:** ATMs are not to be relied on. A few are available in Victoria Falls, but they are consistently out of money. If you don't have enough cash on hand for Zimbabwe, your best bet is to use an ATM at one of the regional airports outside of Zimbabwe, such as Jo'burg. Then convert the money you get (which will be in local currency) to U.S. dollars at the exchange desk. U.S. dollars are available at some ATMs in Victoria Falls, but shortages are common and it can not be guaranteed.

**Botswana:** The places we visit in Botswana are generally out in the bush where there are no ATMs.

**Madagascar:** ATMs are widely available in larger cities and towns, but less common everywhere else.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Namibia:** Credit cards are more commonly accepted in Namibia, but many camps and lodges will be cash only. Businesses that do accept credit cards tend to use a slow approval process that may involve calling your credit card company for authorization.

**Zimbabwe:** Credit cards are only somewhat accepted. You can usually use them at hotels in Victoria Falls, high-end shops, pharmacies or supermarkets. (In contrast, camps/bush lodges, street vendors, and small souvenir shops tend to be cash only.) Of the major credit cards, Visa

is the most useful as it is accepted in more places and may let you process the transaction in U.S. dollars. MasterCard is not as well-known and both American Express and Discover are not accepted at all.

**Botswana:** A few lodges have become cashless, so we suggest bringing a credit or debit card in case. But generally most businesses won't accept them.

**Madagascar:** Credit cards such as Visa and, less commonly, MasterCard are accepted in most large towns, however Discover and American Express are generally not. For more rural areas, make sure to have cash, as it is unlikely you will be able to use a credit card.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8-\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night

*Please Note:* Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional pre- and post-trip extensions for local guides, drivers, lodge and camp staff, driver-guides, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

## Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

## What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Optional Tours: Reserve Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you reserve the following optional tours in advance. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to do so is 45 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, space will be available for booking onsite, but this not guaranteed. Optional tours with O.A.T. can only be purchased with a credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or a debit card with credit card functionality. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "OPT Boston" (depending on your credit card company).

## Sunrise Hot-Air Balloon Safari

Early risers may wish to join an optional hot-air balloon ride that soars above the vast Sossusvlei at sunrise. At the centerpiece of this optional tour is a ride over the Sesriem Canyon, a narrow, half-mile-long gorge that plunges 100 feet, creating a sheer cliff of limestone and sand. A remarkable variety of birds and wildlife make their home along this dramatic precipice, including falcons, Spotted eagle-owls, lizards, and jackals.

Travelers are required to depart from our lodge at least one half hour before sunrise. The flight itself lasts for approximately one hour and concludes with a celebratory Champagne breakfast at the landing site.

This optional tour is offered during the main trip. The cost is \$685 per person.

**Please note:** *This tour must be pre-booked at least 30 days prior to departure. This tour is dependent on wind conditions.*

## Eye of an Elephant

Take advantage of this opportunity to immerse yourself in the world of an elephant at Shearwater Victoria Falls Private Game Reserve. You can observe, and lightly interact with, the beautiful creatures and discover their unique personalities. We'll also enjoy discussions with the elephant carers about the organization's conservation efforts, as well as their plans to rehabilitate and release the elephants back into the wild.

**Please Note:** *This optional tour is pre-sold only and must be reserved at least 30 days prior to departure.*

This optional tour is offered during the *Botswana & Zimbabwe: Chobe National Park & Victoria Falls* trip extension. The cost is \$103 per person.

## Communicating with Home from Abroad

One of the advantages of an African adventure is the chance to “unplug” and unwind—but the trade-off is that you won't have the same access to the Internet, email, or phone service that you would back at home.

Cell phone or Internet service will be available in some places, but not all.

### Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is



“unlocked”, meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is “unlocked” then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with “Pay as You Go” cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

**Please understand that throughout Africa, good cell phone service is only available in large towns or cities.**

### Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like FaceTime or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

### Internet

Internet access on this adventure will be mostly limited to cities and towns. In many cases, it will not be wireless Internet service, but rather public computers in the hotel lobby or business center. Expect the connection to be slow, especially when multiple people are using it at the same time. The hotels and lodges that do offer wireless Internet service will usually charge for the service.

### Receiving Calls from Home

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one is to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**South Africa:** +27

**Botswana:** +267

**Namibia:** +264

**Madagascar:** +261

**Zimbabwe:** +263

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Up to <b>44 lbs for checked luggage</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: Checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+width+depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Bag:** We recommend that you bring a sturdy, soft-sided suitcase with wheels.
- *TIP: When traveling with a companion we recommend “cross-packing,” i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion’s luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during game drives.
- **Luggage Handling on Arrival:** Airport porters are not allowed in the customs hall area. When you land, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and then clear customs. When you exit the airport building, your driver will load your luggage into the coach.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Pack casual clothes:** The presiding clothing style of this trip is casual. Men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need nice dresses—bring these only if you are planning a special night out on your own.
- **Good walking shoes are essential:** Supportive sneakers are ideal for daytime touring. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. Bring a few pairs of socks, including a warm pair. A pair of cushioned sandals is handy for town visits, and rubber thongs are very useful for poolside use and bathroom floors, which can be slippery.
- **Light rain gear:** Africa’s rainfall inland is notoriously unreliable and much of it is very sporadic in both time and place. A waterproof jacket and rain hat will prepare you for whatever the day brings. If you are traveling during the rainy season, you may want to include a foldable umbrella.
- **Cold-weather layers (for June, July, and August):** Desert temperatures fluctuate rapidly, and freezing mornings can turn into hot days by 9am, so it is best to dress in layers in the winter to adjust to these temperature changes. Winter evenings will see rapid temperature drops so it is advisable to keep a warm jacket handy between July and September. For early morning game drives (April through to September) it is very chilly. We suggest a warm

jacket that will also keep out the wind. Windy “in-between” weather occurs, too, which calls for a light windproof, breathable shell. Your rain jacket can double as a windbreaker. Make sure it’s roomy enough to comfortably fit over your fleece jacket.

- **Dress etiquette in local communities:** Summery attire is appropriate, but please do not offend local customs by wearing skimpy shorts. Knee-length shorts, pants, and casual shirts are in order.
- **Victoria Falls (optional extension):** For exploring Victoria Falls, bring a bathing suit, shorts, and rubber-soled shoes. At certain times of the year, the mist at Victoria Falls is very heavy and you will get wet!

### Fashion Dos and Don’ts

- **Do wear muted earth tones** (beige, khaki, etc.) because they don’t show dirt easily, coordinate well, and don’t distract animals.
- **Don’t wear white or very brightly colored clothing.** These colors have traditionally been used to keep animals away, and even color-blind animals can spot dark and light shades like black and white, which is why white is a danger signal for some species.
- **Do wear clothes that are functional and casual.** There’s no need for formal or dressy clothing, although travelers may want one nicer outfit for a dinner out in Cape Town.
- **Don’t wear camouflage or military-type clothing in Zimbabwe—it is illegal.**

### Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

**What not to pack:** Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Leave behind any credit cards that are not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

### Recommended Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap



- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Compact binoculars (one pair each — 8 x 21 or 6 x 16 work well)
- ☐ Moisturizer, lip balm
- ☐ Swimsuit
- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat with chin strap
- ☐ Buff or scarf for protection from dusty or sandy conditions
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards, prescriptions for your medicines
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- ☐ Flashlight and eye drops, for the dust on the safaris during the main trip and pre-trip extension
- ☐ Victoria Falls extension only: U.S. souvenirs or gently used clothing to trade with vendors
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Collapsible walking staff

### Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments

- ☐ A warm layer, such as a sweater, fleece pullover, or jacket

## Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed, Dristan, etc.
- ☐ Pain relief: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Allergy medicine for dusty conditions
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin
- ☐ Optional: Motion sickness medicine
- ☐ Optional: Anti-malarial medication (ask your doctor)
- ☐ Optional: Prescription anti-diarrheal

## Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in South Africa, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, and Namibia is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

## Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

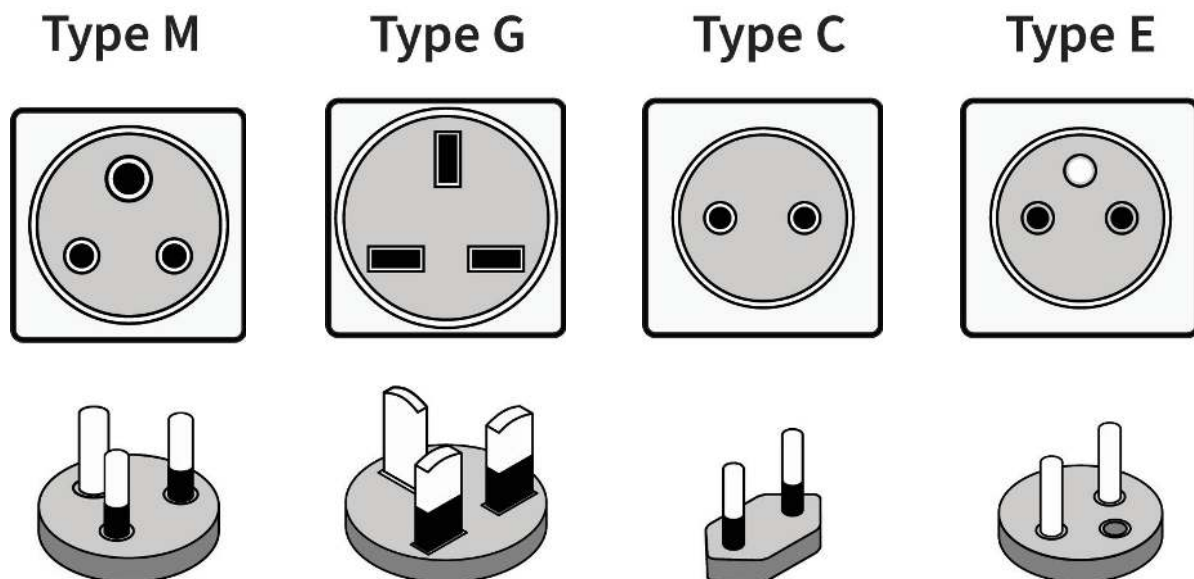
**South Africa:** M. It can be difficult to find a Type M adapter in the U.S.; you can find them at large local airports like the Johannesburg and Cape Town airports.

**Namibia:** M (a larger version of D)

**Zimbabwe:** M or G

**Botswana:** M

**Madagascar:** C or E



## Availability

Except for the occasional power outage, electricity will be readily available on the trip. However, in order to be prepared for power outages, travelers who rely on a CPAP machine must bring one that runs on rechargeable batteries.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Namibia:** Most of Namibia's climate is typical of semi-desert terrain: hot days and cool nights. The coast is cooler and often foggy, due to the cold Benguela current, which causes fog and inhibits rainfall. Over the central plateau, which is higher up, temperatures are understandably lower. Nights here can be very cold, with frost. Rainfall occurs exclusively in the summer months, between November and March, when heavy thunderstorms can be expected. Summer is very hot and the Namib Desert should be avoided at this time as temperatures are often above 104°. Winter (May–August) is another matter. It is dry and cold during the early mornings and evenings, and you will feel even colder in an open vehicle—especially on those early mornings. The days are bit warmer. Be sure to bring warm clothes for the winter.

**Cape Town, South Africa:** Located where mountains slope down to coastal lowlands, Cape Town has a Mediterranean climate of mild, rainy winters and sunny summers. In the summer months, December to February, the temperature ranges from around 68–78°F during the day and 55–64°F during the night. In the winter months, June to August, temperature ranges from around 54–62°F during the day and 39–46°F at night. The city experiences little rain during the summer. The summer wind, called “the Cape Dr” by locals, can be strong, blowing mainly from North to East, which can be refreshing during the hot summer days. The city gets frequent rain during the winter and the mountains receive a little snow.

**Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe:** Victoria Falls is humid and hot most of the year, with temperatures often in the 90s.

**Madagascar:** Sitting between Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, Madagascar experiences extreme weather conditional throughout the year. During the country's hot and rainy seasons, typically between November and April, trade winds blow in from the southeast and monsoons from the northwest, producing destructive cyclones. May to October, the cooler, dry season, is calmer. The frequent rains support the rainforest on the island's eastern coast, with the center being drier and the southern tip semi-acrid.

**Southern Hemisphere:** As you will be traveling in the Southern Hemisphere for this adventure, the seasons will be reversed from those north of the Equator. (For example, January is a summer month.)

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.



## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA			WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	77 to 63	83 to 60	7	84 to 69	64 to 39	3.1
FEB	78 to 63	86 to 60	6	81 to 66	72 to 47	3.2
MAR	76 to 60	88 to 63	7	79 to 64	69 to 41	3.1
APR	72 to 56	90 to 67	10	77 to 59	67 to 34	1.5
MAY	67 to 52	90 to 69	13	73 to 53	55 to 26	0.3
JUN	64 to 48	88 to 70	16	68 to 47	50 to 23	--
JUL	62 to 47	89 to 70	16	68 to 46	42 to 19	--
AUG	63 to 48	89 to 67	16	73 to 51	39 to 16	--
SEP	65 to 51	88 to 65	14	79 to 59	34 to 15	0.1
OCT	69 to 54	85 to 63	11	82 to 64	38 to 19	0.5
NOV	72 to 58	84 to 61	9	85 to 68	44 to 21	1.1
DEC	75 to 61	85 to 60	8	86 to 70	51 to 27	1.6

MONTH	VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE			CHOBE NATIONAL PARK, BOTSWANA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	86 to 65	73	6.6	88 to 66	--	6.3
FEB	85 to 64	77	5.0	86 to 64	--	5.3
MAR	86 to 63	69	2.8	88 to 63	--	3.1
APR	85 to 57	60	1.0	86 to 59	--	0.7
MAY	81 to 49	53	0.1	82 to 55	--	0.2
JUN	77 to 43	52	--	79 to 50	--	0
JUL	77 to 42	44	--	79 to 50	--	0
AUG	82 to 47	37	--	84 to 54	--	0
SEP	89 to 55	33	0.1	91 to 61	--	0
OCT	92 to 63	35	1.1	95 to 64	--	0.8
NOV	90 to 65	57	2.5	91 to 66	--	2.6
DEC	86 to 65	71	6.8	88 to 68	--	5.9

MONTH	ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	81 to 63	81	6.8
FEB	81 to 63	82	6.0
MAR	81 to 62	81	3.4
APR	79 to 60	79	0.8
MAY	76 to 55	79	0.1
JUN	72 to 51	79	--
JUL	70 to 49	78	--
AUG	72 to 50	76	--
SEP	76 to 52	71	--
OCT	81 to 56	70	0.6
NOV	82 to 59	73	2.2
DEC	82 to 62	79	5.6

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### South African Culture

South Africa is a veritable tapestry of heritage and historical influences, encompassing a multitude of cultures woven together throughout history, from the first known peoples called the San—sometimes referred to as “Bushmen”—to Bantu, Xhosa, and Zulu tribes and European colonists. But with the arrival of the European colonists came Apartheid, a legal and political system based in segregation and racial discrimination that has continued to color South African history and culture since its inception.

Although Apartheid policies were officially disbanded with the election of anti-Apartheid activist Nelson Mandela, the country's first black president, in 1994, the social and economic effects of Apartheid continue to have a lasting impact on non-white communities. Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu labeled post-Apartheid South Africa as “the Rainbow Nation” to celebrate its multi-culturalism and diverse ethnicities, and you'll see myriad customs and cultural traditions during your time here.

But you'll see some commonalities between them as well, such as a shared love of music and dance, which serve not only as recreation, but as a form of cultural expression and storytelling. Music and dancing have served as an important means of cultural fusion, even under Apartheid, such as when performers like Johnny Clegg, a white South African, formed two mixed-race bands and learned traditional Zulu music.

Another cornerstone of South African culture is a show of respect for others, from giving someone their full attention during a friendly conversation, to maintaining strong eye contact. This respect is also evident from the generosity and hospitality they show visitors. For example, many South African people will offer refreshments upon arrival to their home, and it can be interpreted as rude to decline in some communities. While it is seen as respectful to offer compliments, be careful not to be overly complimentary of any particular objects, lest your hosts feel pressured to offer it to you as a gift.

### Laundry Service

Laundry services are available for a fee at most of your hotels.

## Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

## South African Cuisine

In South Africa, the cuisine bears the culinary influences of the many ethnic groups who have settled here, including, but not limited to, the Dutch, British, Portuguese, and Indian. As for the local specialties, here are a few to try:

- **Bobotie:** The national dish of South Africa, **bobotie** is Indonesian in origin. It's a casserole made from beef or lamb seasoned with curry; layered with dried fruits and chutney; topped with egg custard and bay leaves; and baked till brown and bubbly.
- **Chakalaka:** A spicy, cold vegetable relish made with tomatoes, onions, peppers, carrots, and beans. It was invented in Johannesburg, but is now a staple at all South African **braais** (barbecue).
- **Biltong:** Air-dried strips of beef or other meat that have been cured in salt and marinated in vinegar. The resulting jerky is high in protein and a great portable snack during those long game drives.
- **Melktart:** A pastry crust filled with creamy custard and dusted with cinnamon.

## Namibian Cuisine

Traditional Namibian dishes have a focus on game meats, like eland, oryx, kudu, crocodile, or beef, with few vegetarian side dishes. As the country borders the South Atlantic ocean, many dishes also include fish and seafood such as kingklip, kabeljou, and shellfish being. With the country being nearly entirely desert, few fresh fruits or vegetables grow in the area, with notable exceptions such as gem squash, butternut squash, oranges, and papayas. In most restaurants in Namibia, you are more likely to find an international menu, like Italian or French, than traditional Namibia dishes. Even outside of big towns like Windhoek and Swakopmund, you're likely to find an abundance of fried-food restaurants. Dishes to try include:

- **Potjiekos:** A dish meat in a large pot with carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, pumpkin, potato starch, and game meats (such as venison and poultry).
- **Mealie pap or oshifima:** A porridge made of cornmeal, salt, and water, and served with peppers, onions, and fish or goat meat.
- **Meat skewers:** A common staple of many meals, the skewers are often made with ostrich or crocodile meat and spiced with lemon, red chili, peanut butter, cashew nuts, and coconut milk.
- Due to being colonized by Germany, there is a heavy German influence on Namibia's desserts, as you can easily find *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel), *sachertorte* (chocolate cake with apricot jam), and *schwarzwald kirschtorte* (Black Forest cake) in any one of Namibia's *konditoreien* (cake shops).

## Zimbabwean Cuisine

Like most Southern Africa countries, Zimbabwean cuisine bears the culinary influences of the many ethnic groups who have settled here. This is especially true of the British, whom Zimbabwe served as a colony for decades. Zimbabwean cuisine itself relies on few staples, most notably cornmeal and peanut butter. They also love meat and many local menus feature exotic game like warthogs, kudu, ostrich, and crocodile. Some traditional dishes include:

- **Bota:** A thin breakfast porridge, cooked without cornmeal and usually flavored with peanut butter, milk, butter, or jam
- **Sadza:** A starchy porridge (similar to grits or polenta), with a tasty pumpkin leaf relish cooked with peanut butter.
- **Mopane worms:** A large, edible caterpillar of the emperor moth. Usually served fried, these crispy snacks are high in protein.
- **Dovi:** An aromatic stew made with peppers, onions, carrots, and garlic simmered in a peanut butter sauce.
- **Mapopo:** A papaya candy.

## Botswanan Cuisine

As a cattle country, Botswana's cuisine differs from most other Southern African countries, focusing heavily on meat. Some of these dishes include:

- **Seswaa:** Botswana's national dish, *seswaa* is cooked in a three-legged pot (called a *potjie*) over an open fire. It can be made with beef, goat, lamb, or chicken simmered with onions and peppers. The meat is removed and then the men vigorously pound it until it is soft; then it is served with *pap*, a starchy porridge (similar to grits or polenta) made from white corn maize.



- **Morogo:** A dish of leafy greens (such as pumpkin leaves) simmered with onions, tomatoes, and butter.
- **Dikgobe:** A dish made from a combination of beans, peas and **samp** (processed maize), with a porridge-like consistency. The dish is usually served at lunch, as a side to a meat dish.
- **Chicken in a Hole:** A dish where the poultry is seasoned with piri-piri chilies, curry, vinegar, garlic, and salt before being cooked underground, where it retains all its juices and falls off the bone.

## Malagasy Cuisine

As a island nation populated by immigrants, Malagasy cuisine has been influenced by the Southeast Asia, Africa, India, Chinese, and Europe, countries that helped shape Madagascar to the country it is today. The seafarers from Borneo arrived first, followed by the Arab and Indian traders who brought new fruits, vegetables, and seasonings with them. More people migrated over from Africa and Asia, mixing in their unique cuisines until the Europeans arrived. Today, rice and tubers are considered cornerstones of Malagasy diet, with the many meals served with a sauce made of onions, tomatoes, garlic, and ginger. Dishes to try include:

- **Romazava:** The national dish of Madagascar, *romazava* is a traditional zebu meat stew with leafy greens, tomatoes, and onions, served with rice.
- **Lasary:** A vegetable dish of carrots, green beans, cabbage, and onions, seasoned with vinaigrette. Can be used as a dish by itself or eaten as a sandwich.
- **Foza sy hena-hisoa:** A seafood platter consisting of stir-fried pork, crab, and lobster, seasoned with ginger and lime and served with rice
- **Mofo gasy:** A popular breakfast bread of a deep-fried dough made of flour, water, yeast, sugar and cream of rice. The small pancake can be topped with maple syrup, juice or fruits.
- **Koba:** A traditional dessert made of mashed bananas, vanilla beans, ground peanuts, cornflour, and honey. The mixture is wrapped in banana leaves and boiled or steamed
- **Mofo-anana:** The dish consists of greens mixed into the bread batter and deep-fried as fritters, served with a chili, garlic and ginger sauce.
- **Sambusa:** Similar to Indian samosa, *sambusa* are triangle-shaped fried pouches stuffed with ground beef and potatoes.
- **Ranovola:** A popular drink in Madagascar, *ranovola* is made by adding a cup of cooked rice to a pot and cooking it until it's slightly toasted. Then you add water, steep the mixture, cool it, and strain it.

## Language Barrier

You can have some great “conversations” with local people who do not speak English, even if you don’t speak a word of the local language. Indeed, this non-verbal communication can be a highly rewarding part of travel. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. If you want to meet kids, bring a puppet or other interactive toy. Your Trip Experience Leader can help get the ball rolling.

Your attire is a key part of your non-verbal presentation. Your clothing should show a respect for local tradition. In small towns or near villages, you should dress in a relatively modest style—avoid revealing or tight-fitting outfits. The application of this guideline varies. You will see people in cities and large towns dressed in a modern style. And, of course, many foreign tourists are not sensitive to this at all. But you should dress modestly if you want to earn the respect of the local people.

## Responsible Safari Travel

We do our best to have a minimum negative impact on local cultures and the natural environment in every country we operate trips. Here’s how you can assist in this effort.

### Respecting Wildlife

- Observe the animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on a game drive can frighten the animals away.
- Never attempt to attract an animal’s attention. Don’t imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound on the vehicle, or throw objects. Failure to obey this rule could result in your removal from a National Park by one of the Park Rangers on patrol.
- Please respect your driver-guides’ judgment about your proximity to wildlife. Don’t insist that he or she take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal.
- Litter tossed on the ground can choke or poison animals and birds.
- Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals may have become accustomed to human visitors. Failure to adhere to this could cause you to be bitten and need immediate rabies shots, which are unpleasant and costly.
- Smoking is not allowed on game drives. The dry African bush ignites very easily, and a flash fire can harm hundreds of animals.

### Conserving the Natural Environment

- Minimize the disposable items you bring on the trip and dispose of your trash properly.
- Whenever possible, please minimize the use of single-use plastic drinking water bottles and use the provided O.A.T. water bottle.

- Stay on established trails to avoid damaging plants.
- Don't pick any vegetation, or remove any item of biological interest.

## **Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More**

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### **Returns**

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### **Crafts & Souvenirs**

#### **South Africa**

Traditional items for sale include hand-woven rugs, pottery, beadwork, wood carvings, *kangas* (a colorful woven garment), meerschaum pipes, fine basketry, and quality coffee and tea. In sophisticated Cape Town, there are fashionable boutiques and big-city shopping malls. South Africa is a major source of the world's diamonds and other precious stones—either as jewelry or as gems you can have set back at home.

#### **Namibia**

Namibia offers many fine craft items at good prices. Traditional souvenirs include gems and gemstone jewelry, batik artwork, traditional African woven cloths, stone and wood sculptures, leather goods, bead work, and fine basketry.

#### **Zimbabwe**

Common souvenirs in Zimbabwe are geometric fabrics, Raku-fired ceramics, hand-woven baskets, traditional masks, wood-carved figurines, shona sculptures, and jewelry.

#### **Botswana**

Traditional souvenirs include gems and gemstone jewelry, batik artwork, traditional African woven cloths, stone and wood sculptures, terracotta, leather goods, beadwork, bone carvings, Bushmen's handicrafts, and fine basketry.

## Madagascar

While visiting Madagascar, keep an eye out for scarves, shawls, and soft furnishings made from the wild silk of endemic silk worms, weaved baskets or mats, spices, local chocolate, woodcarvings, toys made from recycled cans or plastic bottles, and textiles. Any one of them would be an amazing souvenir to return home with or gift to someone who couldn't visit Madagascar with you.

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### South Africa

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 470,693 square miles
- **Capital:** Pretoria (administrative), Cape Town (legislative), Bloemfontein (judicial)
- **Languages:** There are twelve official languages; English, South African Sign Language, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Sepedi, Setswana, Sesotho, and Xitsonga and others are all spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Black African 80.2%, white 8.4%, biracial 8.8%, Indian/Asian 2.5%
- **Location:** South Africa is bordered by Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Indian Ocean, and the South Atlantic Ocean to the west.
- **Geography:** Africa's southernmost country, South Africa has three major natural regions: the plateau, the mountains, and the coastal belt.
- **Population:** 60,604,992 (Estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 36.6% (Zionist Christian 11.1%, Pentecostal/Charismatic 8.2%, Methodist 6.8%, Dutch Reformed 6.7%, Anglican 3.8%), Catholic 7.1%, Muslim 1.5%, other Christian 36%, other 2.3%, unspecified 1.4%, none 15.1%
- **Time Zone:** South Africa is on South Africa Standard Time (SAST), seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in South Africa.

## National Holidays: South Africa

In addition to the holidays listed below, South Africa celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Family Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

03/21 Human Rights Day

04/27 Freedom Day

05/01 Workers' Day

06/16 Youth Day

08/09 National Women's Day

09/24 Heritage Day

12/16 Day of Reconciliation

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Day of Goodwill

## South Africa: A Brief History

The San, nomadic hunter-gatherers, were the earliest people to inhabit southern Africa. DNA evidence suggests that the San—sometimes referred to as “Bushmen”—lived here as long ago as 100,000 B.C, very likely making them the oldest people in the world. If so, then we can all trace our genes to them. In the fourth or fifth century B.C., the first Bantus arrived, bringing the first tribal structure to the region and taking over most of the arable land.

In the late 15th century, the Europeans arrived, first from Portugal, then from Holland. The latter settled here and took slaves from Madagascar, India, and Indonesia. The Dutch were losing their foothold by the late 18th century, leaving them vulnerable to the British, who set up a base in Cape Town as a pit stop en route to India and Australia. The British continued what the Dutch had started: They fought the native Xhosa people, pushing eastward to expand their reach and erecting fortresses along the Fish River.

The remaining Dutch Boer farmers escaped British control when they set off to establish their own colony in the north and the east of South Africa. But en route, they came across many deserted or decimated villages. Villagers they met were dazed and confused. The Boers would meet the culprits of this ransacking when they came upon the Zulu, who were running their campaign of terror to overtake land from surrounding tribes. With fierce struggle, the Boers faced them down and formed their own settlements, only to be confronted themselves by the British, who were bent on land acquisition. Then, a sea of diamonds appeared in the earth in nearby Kimberley, giving the Boers a bit more incentive to stay—and to fight the British with everything they had.

They resisted the British push with guerilla tactics in the First Boer War. But the British returned with greater force to defeat them in the Second Boer War at the turn of the 20th century. The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 by the British and the Dutch-Afrikaans set the stage for apartheid with its race-based policies, restrictions, and repression. Blacks were segregated to live in squalid backwaters known as “homelands.”



The white, ruling Afrikaners paid plenty of lip service to the supposed self-sufficiency of these regions, but provided no means or opportunities for improvements. In the 1960s, black people began to protest with strikes and marches. It wasn't long before things turned violent: 69 were killed in Sharpeville and members of the African National Congress (ANC) were jailed, Nelson Mandela among them.

Opposition against apartheid grew worldwide, and with the economic impacts of sanctions and divestments, the National Party's FW de Klerk lifted the ban on the ANC and, 27 years after his imprisonment, released Nelson Mandela. In 1994, he won the country's first multi-racial election by a landslide and became president.

Some of the disparities of apartheid remain, but South Africa is far more optimistic than it once was. Four subsequent presidents have been elected into office since Mandela's retirement in 1999, with Cyril Ramaphosa serving as the current President since 2018.

## Namibia

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 318,261 square miles
- **Capital:** Windhoek
- **Languages:** English is the official language of Namibia; Afrikaans (common language of most of the population), German, and indigenous languages are also spoken.
- **Ethnicity:** Black 87.5%, white 6%, mixed 6.5%; about 50% of the population belong to the Ovambo tribe and 9% to the Kavangos tribe; other ethnic groups include Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, Bushmen 3%, Baster 2%, Tswana 0.5%
- **Location:** Namibia is bordered by South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Geography:** With scant exception (in the north near Angola and in the thin Caprivi Strip), rainfall is rare and lakes or ponds are few. Two deserts blanket its land with sand: the Namib, possibly the oldest in the world, follows the entire Skeleton Coast and stretches 60 to 100 miles inland; and the Kalahari comprises almost the entire eastern part of the country. Central Namibia (a high, rocky escarpment that soars more than 6,500 feet above sea level) sees a mere six inches of rain per year.
- **Population:** 2,212,307
- **Religions:** Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least), indigenous beliefs 10% to 20%
- **Time Zone:** Namibia is on West Africa Time, seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington, D.C., it is 1pm in Windhoek.

## National Holidays: Namibia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Namibia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

03/21 Independence Day

05/01 May Day

05/04 Cassinga Day

05/25 Africa Day

08/26 Heroes' Day

12/10 International Human Rights Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Day of Goodwill

## Namibia: A Brief History

The San were the earliest people to inhabit southern Africa. These nomadic hunter-gatherers were hardy and could quickly adapt to the region's severe terrain and climate. DNA evidence suggests that the San—sometimes referred to as “Bushmen”—were in fact the oldest people in the world, and southern Africa was their Eden. If so, then we can all trace our genes to them.

In the third or fourth century B.C., the first Bantus arrived on south-central Namibia's plateaus. They brought the first tribal structure to the region and drove other tribes into the desert or the swamps of the Okavango Delta. Tribes that did not retreat were taken on as slaves to the Bantu.

Around the fifth century, A.D., tribal Khoi-Khoi groups came into the region from Botswana, settling here to raise livestock. Over time, they displaced the San and ruled Namibia until the 16th century. Archaeological records suggest that the Khoi-Khoi were among the first pottery makers. Descendants of all these tribes remain in Namibia today, but most have been assimilated into modern society. Namibia's barren and inhospitable coastline largely turned away European explorers. But the late 15th century saw Portuguese mariners landing on its shores, merely to erect stone crosses along the beaches that could be used to guide navigation. Not until the late 1800s did Namibia become the object of imperial affections, when Germany annexed it. The enclave of Walvis Bay, however, was ignored by Germany, but taken by the British in 1878 for the Cape Colony.

In 1904, the Herero people—part of the Bantu tribe—rose up against German colonists. But their uprising was brutally quelled, and 60,000 Hereros were killed. Meanwhile, just east of Lüderitz in the southern Namib Desert, diamonds were discovered. German authorities, anxious to keep the locals out, quickly labeled the region a sperrgebiet, or “forbidden area,” and they set to mining.

After World War I, the League of Nations mandated that South Africa rule what had become known as South-West Africa. After World War II, the mandate stood, but the UN didn't go so far as to grant South Africa annexation. Still, the South African government granted Namibian whites representation in their parliament in 1949. As a result, Namibia's farmland was doled out to white settlers, and black workers were legally relegated as “reserves.”

Nationalism rose during the following decade, giving birth to the militaristic South West Africa People's Organization (Swapo). A war for independence ignited. Still, Swapo pursued a more peaceful avenue when they presented their case against South African occupation to the International Court of Justice in 1966. Despite an inconclusive outcome, the UN General Assembly terminated the mandate of 50 years ago and got to work administering the region with the creation of the Council for South West Africa. But the council failed to create any internal government, so South Africa easily inserted itself, refusing to officially let go of Namibia unless Cuban troops left Angola, which borders Namibia to the north. As a response, Swapo stepped up guerrilla activities.

It wasn't until 20 years later that a resolution was brokered in the form of a 1988 UN-sponsored deal that ensured Cuban troops would leave Angola if South African troops withdrew from Namibia. With all that said and done, Swapo won the 1989 elections, a constitution was created, and independence began under the presidency of Swapo leader Sam Nujoma. Walvis Bay was ceded by the British in 1994 after the end of apartheid in South Africa.

But peace would be short-lived. In 1999, Namibia welcomed Angolan troops onto its soil so they could attack UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) from a more strategic position. Namibia was once again embroiled in conflict, even if as its own nation.

By far the one of the biggest controversies in recent times of Namibia has been the issue of land reform. At first, Namibia's President Nujoma took a more conciliatory approach than his colleague Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. While the latter took forcible possession of white farms, Nujoma condemned illegal land seizures and created a "willing seller, willing buyer" approach that was designed to allow for the peaceful redistribution of land from white farmers to black farmhands. By 2003, he had averted 15 farm invasions and played a role in a crucial agreement between a black farmhands' union and white farmers. But with the 2004 election Hifikepunye Pohamba (who had previously been the Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation) came a more authoritarian approach; it became compulsory that white farmers turn over their land in exchange for a payout from the government. President Pohamba was re-elected in 2009 with over 70% of the popular vote; his term expired in 2015. Pohamba was succeeded by President Hage Geingob, who served as Prime Minister of Namibia from 1990 to 2002 and again from 2012 to 2015. President Geingob was re-elected in 2015 with Saara Kuugongelwa serving as Namibia's first female Prime Minister. President Geingob passed in February 2024 and was succeeded by his Vice President, Nangolo Mbumba.

## Zimbabwe

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 150,872 square miles
- **Capital:** Harare
- **Languages:** English is the official language; Shona and Ndebele are also spoken.

- **Ethnicity:** African 99.4% (predominantly Shona; Ndebele is the second largest ethnic group), other 0.4%, unspecified 0.2%
- **Location:** Zimbabwe is bordered by Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa, and Botswana.
- **Geography:** Zimbabwe is twice as large as Great Britain. Its Victoria Falls, approximately one mile long with a maximum drop of 420 feet, is located on the Zambezi River by the Zambia–Zimbabwe border.
- **Population:** 15,418,674 (Estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 75.9% (includes Apostolic 38%, Pentecostal 21.1%, other 16.8%), Roman Catholic 8.4%, other Christian 8.4%, other 1.2% (includes traditional, Muslim), none 6.1%
- **Time Zone:** Zimbabwe is on Central Africa Time, seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Harare.

### National Holidays: Zimbabwe

In addition to the holidays listed below, Zimbabwe celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Heroes' Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

02/21 National Youth Day

04/18 Independence Day

05/01 Workers Day

05/25 Africa Day

12/22 Unity Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

### Zimbabwe: A Brief History

The name "Zimbabwe" comes from the capital city of the Monomotapa Empire, whose heyday occurred between the 5th and 15th centuries in this part of Africa. By the late 19th century, the area was occupied by African tribes including the Ndebele and the Shona, led by the powerful chief Lobengula. In 1890, a British column led by Cecil Rhodes marched from South Africa in search of precious minerals. They established Fort Salisbury (now Harare) and disbanded. Through treaties and persuasion, Rhodes and his British South Africa Company acquired mineral rights in Lobengula's kingdom.

Rhodes claimed the territory north of the Limpopo River for Great Britain and distributed it among his pioneers and the indigenous Africans. The country was known as Rhodesia for many years in his honor. The northern portion is now Zambia, while the former Southern Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe in 1980 in honor of its historical and cultural heritage.

The Ndebele took up arms in 1893 and again in 1896. European settlers spread from the area around Fort Salisbury, and by 1897 the railway had reached from South Africa to Bulawayo, the capital of Lobengula's former kingdom. A few years later the line was extended to reach the coalfields of Hwange, the copper belt in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), and Salisbury, which was already linked by rail to the port of Beira in Portuguese Mozambique.

Southern Rhodesia was granted independence by the British in 1923 as an autonomous member of the Commonwealth, but the passage of the Land Apportionment Act in 1931 solidified political power in the hands of the white minority. In 1953, Southern Rhodesia merged with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi). Vigorous opposition by nationalists in Zambia and Malawi led to the dissolution of the federation in 1963. In 1965, Rhodesia's prime minister, Ian Smith, announced a unilateral declaration of independence.

During the 1960s and 1970s, nationalism was building in Rhodesia under the parties led by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe. Both groups had to take refuge in neighboring independent countries. From there, they waged a seven-year struggle for liberation from white minority rule. At last, an agreement was reached to hold a popular election in 1980. Mugabe won a landslide victory to become Zimbabwe's first prime minister under majority rule.

The parliament passed a Land Acquisition Bill in 1992, allowing the government to redistribute about half the land owned by white commercial farmers to black peasants. In his successful 1996 re-election campaign, Mugabe made a pledge to do more to speed up the resettlement of poor black people on land acquired by the government.

After 28 years of what had effectively become a one-party state, some opposition parties began to challenge the status quo as Mugabe became engulfed in scandals, economic problems, and charges of corruption, violence, and election fraud. In Zimbabwe's 2008 elections, for instance, the leader of the country's opposition party, Morgan Tsvangirai, won the popular vote, but Mugabe refused to step down from power quietly. He strong-armed opposition supporters and insisted on a run-off election, despite widespread condemnation from world leaders. In the end, South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki brokered a power-sharing agreement in which Mugabe retained the presidency, with Tsvangirai serving as prime minister.

On November 14, 2017, Mugabe was placed under house arrest during in a military coup staged by members of his own party and the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF). Leaders of the coup appointed Mugabe's former Vice President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, as the new President and gave Mugabe a deadline of November 21 to resign or face impeachment. Mnangagwa was sworn into office on November 24, 2017 and remains the current president.

## Botswana

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 224,607 square miles
- **Capital:** Gaborone
- **Languages:** English (official), Setswana (Tswana)

- **Ethnicity:** Tswana (or Setswana) 79%, Kalanga 11%, Basarwa 3%, other, including Kgalagadi and white 7%
- **Location:** Botswana is bordered by Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia.
- **Geography:** Botswana is a landlocked republic in southern Africa covering an area slightly smaller than France. Bordering nations include Zimbabwe in the northeast, South Africa in the south and southeast, and Namibia to the north and west. The country is geologically a vast sandy tableland with an average elevation of about 3,300 feet (1,000 meters). Large tracts of land in the central south and west (about two-thirds of the country) are covered by the Kalahari Desert. In the north-central portion of Botswana lie the wetlands of the Okavango Delta, the world's largest inland delta, and the salt pans of the Makgadikgadi area.
- **Population:** 2,384,390 (Estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 71.6%, Badimo 6%, other 1.4% (includes Baha'i, Hindu, Muslim), unspecified 0.4%, none 20.6%
- **Time Zone:** Botswana is 7 hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Botswana.

### National Holidays: Botswana

In addition to the holidays listed below, Botswana celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ascension Day. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day

07/01 Sir Seretse Khama Day

07/20 President's Day

09/30 Botswana Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### Botswana: A Brief History

The earliest known inhabitants of what is now Botswana were the San, or Bushmen, who continue to wander the Kalahari Desert today. Their origins are unknown, but they are estimated to have lived here for some 30,000 years. The San were followed by the Khoi-Khoi, or Hottentots; and then came the Bantu tribes around the first or second century AD. In the centuries that followed, southern African tribes like the Basotho made incursions into Botswana, and there was much fragmentation among the tribes until the end of the 18th century.

By 1652, Europeans had arrived on the Cape and had begun their inexorable spread northwards. But the face of Botswana was more significantly altered with the unification of the Zulu tribes under the fierce warlord Shaka, in 1818 (in what is now South Africa). His military machine conquered or destroyed all tribes in his path; by 1830, many tribes in southern and eastern Botswana had either fallen or been absorbed into the Shaka Zulu Empire.



Meanwhile, as the European settlements grew, the Dutch Boers and British colonists began their own partitions of southern Africa, taking advantage of the shifting alliances between fragmented tribes. Tension between the British and the Boers finally erupted in war in 1887. Its geopolitical result was the withdrawal of Britain from the Transvaal in exchange for Boer allegiance to the British Crown. But the Boers continued to push into Tswana territory in the north, in what was then called Bechuanaland (and later to become Botswana). The Tswana people lobbied for British protection, and in 1885, their territory became the Bechuanaland Protectorate, administered by Britain.

In 1910, the Union of South Africa was established with provisions for the incorporation of Bechuanaland. Self-rule advanced within Botswana when advisory councils of African and European residents were set up in 1920. A parliamentary government consisting of the National Assembly and the advisory House of Chiefs and headed by a president was instituted in 1965. Complete independence as a republic came on Sept. 30, 1966. Despite these political developments, Botswana remained among the poorest of nations. Then, in 1967, diamonds were discovered, and the entire economic base of Botswana changed overnight. Botswana now has one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

In the 1970s, Botswana had a growing economy and no apartheid regime and thus was attractive to South African refugees, anti-apartheid activists, and to those fleeing the Civil War in Zimbabwe. (Today Botswana is still one of the few African nations to specifically guarantee freedom of speech, press, and religion in its constitution.)

In 1980, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (now known as the Southern African Development Community) was founded with the express purpose of creating a unified economy in southern Africa. Sadly, the country's biggest crisis to date is one that unites much of Africa—the AIDS epidemic. But in keeping with their history of openness, Botswana's National Health Council has been working hard against the epidemic in ways unheard of in most other African countries: with increased spending, open and frank communications about AIDS transmission, and by working with the government to ensure antiretroviral drugs reach the infected. Although the country saw a decrease in the early 2000s, the national infection rate is currently the third highest in the world.

## Madagascar

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

**Area:** 226,658 sq mi

**Capital:** Antananarivo

**Government:** Unitary semi-presidential constitutional republic

**Languages:** Malagasy and French

**Location:** Madagascar is an island country off the coast of Africa, in the Indian Ocean. It sits parallel with Mozambique with smaller island, such as Reunion, Mauritius, and Mayotte, around it.

**Geography:** The fourth largest island in the world, Madagascar can be broken up into five distinct sections. The tropical lowland forest long the eastern coast, the volcanic northern end called the Tsaratanana Massif region, the rice fields and plateaus of the central highlands, the plans and harbors of the western coast, and the desert region in the south. Madagascar hosts six rivers, the Mananara, the Mangoro, the Maningory, the Bemarivo, the Ivondro, and the Manajary, which flow into the Indian Ocean. The highest point of the island is Maromokotro, in the Tsaratanana Massif, at 9,436ft.

**Population:** 26,262,313 (estimate)

**Religion:** 85.3% Christianity (45.8% Protestant, 38.1% Catholic, 1.4% other Christian), 6.9% Unaffiliated, 4.5% Traditional faiths, 3.0% Islam, 0.3% Others

**Time zone:** Madagascar is on East Africa Time, seven hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is 1pm in Antananarivo

### National Holidays: Madagascar

In addition to the holidays listed below, Madagascar celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **[www. timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)**.

1/1 New Year's Day

3/8 Women's Day

3/29 Martyr's Day

5/1 International Workers' Day

6/26 Independence Day

8/15 Assumption

11/1 All Saints Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### Madagascar: A Brief History

Madagascar is believed to have first been settled 2000 years ago by Indonesians, making it one of the last major landmasses to be settled by humans. These settlers immediately set upon the fauna and flora of the isolated island, making space for agriculture and hunting the native giant lemurs, elephant birds, giant fossa, and Malagasy hippopotamus to extinction.

It wasn't until around 800 AD that Arab traders discovered the island, leading to other peoples from Africa and Asia to find their way to Madagascar, either as migrants or merchants. They saw the island as an important trading hub on the Indian Ocean for the Maritime Silk Roads.

The first European to see Madagascar was Diogo Dias, a Portuguese captain, on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1500. Having been blown off course on his way to India, Dias named the island St. Lawrence and returned home with tales of the untouched land. Hungry for more territory, Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England all sent ships to establish settlements in Madagascar. They were chased off by both the weather – as the area is known for its cyclones – and the Malagasy people. They lost interest and went back to more profitable endeavors.

The island was brought back to the attention of the Europeans in the 1600s, when pirates started to use Madagascar as a base of operations when they attacked European ships transporting goods from India. Multiple settlements were attempted, including a garrison established by the French at Fort-Dauphin. It lasted for thirty years, before a massacre wiped them out in 1674. With the fall of Fort-Dauphin, pirates, such as Captain Kidd, were the only remaining Europeans on the island.

Three kingdoms are established within Madagascar, the Sakalavas from the western coast, the Merina from the central plains, and the Betsimisaraka from the eastern coast. The three kings shared a goal of unifying Madagascar under one kingdom, competing against each other and paying for their battles by exporting slaves to Africa, Europe, and Arabia.

In the 1700s, the Sakalavas declared themselves the first kingdom of Madagascar, having taken over almost half of the island. By 1810, the Merina family, ruled by Andrianampoinimerina, had taken over most of Madagascar from the Sakalavas. At the Merina king's passing, his son, Radama I, cultivated a positive relationship with the British in exchange for help conquering the rest of the island. Per his agreement with the British, Radama allowed English Christian missionaries onto the island to spread their religion, allowed them to transcribe Malagasy into a written language, abolished the slave trade, and welcomed a British emissary into his court. In exchange, Radama received money, martial training for his army, and weapons.

Following Radama's death, his wife, Ranaivalona I took the throne. During her 33-year reign, she forced out the Europeans, persecuted the Christians, executed political rivals, and had babies born on unlucky days culled, leading to multiple rebellions. After her death in 1861, her son Radama II re-opened the island for Europeans and reinstating freedom of religion, only to be murdered two years later by Rainilaiarivony, with the help of Radama II's wife, Rasoherina I.

Rainilaiarivony becomes the prime minister and rules as the husband of the next three queens, Rasoherina I, Ranaivalona II, and Ranaivalona III, over the course of the thirty years.

At the start of Ranaivalona III's reign in 1883, the French invaded Madagascar. By 1897, the French had abolished the monarchy, sent Queen Ranaivalona III into exile, and established Madagascar as a French colony.

The French use the island for its timber and vanilla, holding Madagascar for sixty-three years, through two major rebellions in 1918 and 1947 that are brutally suppressed.

It's not until June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960 that Madagascar gains independence from France and Philibert Tsiranana is elected in as the first president of the Malagasy republic. Tsiranana held office for twelve years, encouraging western relationships and looking to the U.S. and other anti-communist country for support. His successor in 1972, following his resignation due to health complications, General Gabriel Ramanantsoa instead supported the Soviet Union and ousted the remaining French military from the island nation. Ramanantsoa's presidency lasted three years and his replacement, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava was assassinated in a military coup days after the start of his term.

Lieutenant Commander Didier Ratsiraka ruled as a dictator, appointed the military following their coup and ruled in Madagascar from 1975 to 1991. At the start, he maintained Ramanantsoa's communist policies, only to switch to a free-market economy a decade in due to severe economic decline and national debt. Rasiraka was forced to step down due to an economic collapse and fatal protests in 1991 and was succeeded by Albert Zafy of the Live Forces party. Zafy is impeached in 1996 due to rumors of criminal activities, abuse of power, and lack of economic improvement.

Ratsiraka is reelected as president of Madagascar and holds his position until 2001, where he loses to Marc Ravalomana following a contested election where Ratsiraka declared martial law and more violent protests erupted.

During his terms from 2001 to 2009, Ravalomana supported democracy and improved the economy to such a degree the World Bank removed \$20 billion from the country's debt.

Andry Rajoelina overthrew Ravalomanana in a military coup in 2009, to the ire of the UN and the EU, who refused to recognize the new government and withheld their previous aid. It wasn't until 2011 an agreement was struck, and international aid would be returned following the promise of free and fair elections.

The new free and fair elections in 2013 ended with Hery Rajaonarimampianina elected into office. He was succeeded by Andry Rajoelina in 2018. During the pandemic, Rajoelina distributed a mandatory un-tested coronavirus cure, called Covid-Organics, made from artemisia and other local herbs. The herbal tea was also sold to Tanzania, Liberia, Equatorial Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau with no proof of its effectiveness.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### General Africa

***Faces of Africa, Thirty Years of Photography*** OR ***Passages: Photographs in Africa*** by Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher (2004, Photography/Anthropology) Traveling throughout Africa from the Sahara to Cape Horn, Beckwith and Fisher have produced decades of striking images.

***Africa, A Biography of the Continent*** by John Reader (1999, History) A great introduction to Africa from its ancient cultures up to modern times.

***Safari: A Chronicle of Adventure*** by Bartle Bull (1988, History) In fascinating and often amusing detail, Bull delineates the evolution of the African safari—from the first European expedition in ox-driven wagons to the modern-day version in comfortable camps.

#### South Africa

***Born a Crime*** by Trevor Noah (2016, Memoir) The popular late-night television host and comedian describes growing up in apartheid-era South Africa as a biracial child.

***Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*** by Nelson Mandela (1994, Biography) Although there are more recent books about the charismatic South African leader, this is his remarkable story in his own words.

***The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation*** by John Laband (1997, History) The Zulu were perhaps Africa's greatest tribe, yet much of their story has remained untold until now. This careful and in-depth study describes the origins of the Zulu people, their development into the "Black Spartans" under their legendary leader Shaka, and their defeat at the hands of Boers and Britons with superior firepower.

***Burger's Daughter*** by Nadine Gordimer (1979, Fiction) A young Afrikaner woman struggles to define her own path after her famous revolutionary father dies in prison, having spent his life fighting for the rights of South African blacks. The author won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.

***Cry, The Beloved Country*** by Alan Paton (1948, Fiction) This classic novel centers on a Zulu priest and his search for a long lost son, a black man who has been accused of killing a prominent white liberal. It poignantly depicts the disintegration of tribal communities in an increasingly urban society at the dawn of the apartheid era.

#### Namibia

***Soul of a Lion: One Woman's Quest to Rescue Africa's Wildlife Refugees*** by Barbara Bennett (2010, Memoir/Animals) A tribute to Mariete van der Merwe, who runs a unique sanctuary for animals and specializes in helping disabled animals. Recounts the sanctuary's creation and daily life with vigor.

***Namibia Space*** by Julianne du Toit (2007, Nature/Culture) A collection of photographs and essays highlighting Namibia's landscapes, wildlife, and culture.

***The Second Coming of Mavala Shikongo*** by Peter Orner (2006, Fiction) A fascinating novel about the relationship between a beautiful and enigmatic local woman and an American volunteer teacher, set in a school on the edge of Namibia's vast desert.

***Sands of Silence, On Safari in Namibia*** by Peter Hathaway Capstick (1991, Memoir) The first-person story of a hunter on safari in Namibia during the 1980s. The author's defense of big game hunting may be seen as controversial, but his descriptions of the Bushman have been lauded for their accuracy and sensitivity. This book may not be in stock at your local store but can still be found online.

***Burning Shore*** by Wilbur Smith (1985, Fiction) One of a series of highly enjoyable novels from Zambian-born writer Wilbur Smith, this romantic adventure tale is partially set on Namibia's Skeleton Coast. The story follows a shipwrecked French widow's love affair with an Afrikaner outlaw in the Namibian desert. Highly recommended by O.A.T.'s Trip Experience Leaders.

## **Zimbabwe**

***Harvest of Thorns*** by Shimmer Chinodya (2017, Historical Fiction) A powerful story of the Zimbabwean struggle for independence, seen through the eyes of a young guerilla.

***When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*** by Peter Godwin (2006, Memoir) This is the author's searing, eyewitness account of more than three decades of upheaval in Zimbabwe under the independence hero-turned-dictator Robert Mugabe. More than a political memoir, it weaves the personal story of Godwin's own white-liberal family; how they endured constant betrayals, assaults, and losses; and the family secret that ultimately explained their refusal to leave.

***The Girl Who Married a Lion and Other Tales of Africa*** by Alexander McCall Smith (2004, Fiction) A collection of often hilarious, often bizarre, folktales that the author heard as a child growing up in Zimbabwe. Also includes seven new tales from Botswana.

***The Last Resort: A Memoir of Mischief and Mayhem on a Family Farm in Africa*** by Douglas Rogers (2009, Memoir) A critically-acclaimed tale about the author's family's last-ditch effort to save their farm from a government ordinance re-claiming land owned by white farmers. Touching, and at times darkly funny.

***Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*** by Alexandra Fuller (2001, Memoir) The author recalls her eccentric family's meanderings from Zimbabwe to Malawi to Zambia during the upheaval of the Rhodesian Bush War. Written with humor and candor, it is a survival tale you'll not soon forget.

## **Botswana**

***Go Tell the Sun*** by Wame Molefhe (2011, Fiction) This anthology of short stories introduces several Botswanan characters whose lives intersect around issues of culture, gender, and modernity as they contend with family dysfunction, homosexuality, AIDS, and more.



***The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*** by Alexander McCall Smith (1998–2020, Mystery) This internationally popular series of mystery novels follows the escapades of the resourceful detective, Precious Ramotswe. As each mystery unfolds so, too, do the customs, diverse landscapes, and national character of Botswana.

***Whatever You Do, Don't Run: True Tales of a Botswana Safari Guide*** by Peter Allison (2007, Travel Memoir) Raucous and riveting, this guide's-eye view of living and working in the Okavango Delta is a wonderful way to learn how not to behave while on safari.

***Cry of the Kalahari*** by Mark and Delia Owens (1984, Nature/Autobiography) The bestselling story of a young American couple who relocate to the Kalahari Desert, where they work to conserve the local animals, especially lions.

***When Rain Clouds Gather*** by Bessie Head (1968, Fiction) Everything changes for a rural village in Botswana when a South African refugee and a British farming expert cross paths there.

## Madagascar

***Red House Island*** by Andrea Lee (2021, Nonfiction). Shay, an African American woman, buys a vacation home in Madagascar with her wealthy husband Senna. As the couple settle down and raise a family on the island nation, Shay becomes curious about the history, culture, and traditions the land she was beginning to call home.

***Return to the Enchanted Island*** by Johary Ravaloson, translated by Allison M. Charette (2019, Fiction). The second novel from Madagascar to be translated into English, *Return to the Enchanted Island* is a coming of age story about Ietsy Razak, a wealthy Malagasy young man who winds up in a French boarding school where he feels like he is losing himself. It isn't until Razak returns home to Madagascar that he finds himself again.

***Beyond the Rice Fields*** by Naivo, translated by Allison M. Charette (2017, Historical Fiction). The first novel from Madagascar to be translated into English, *Beyond the Rice Fields* is a story about a slave boy and his master's daughter as they live through Christian missionaries, French colonialism, and love in 19<sup>th</sup> century Madagascar.

***Lords and Lemurs: Mad Scientists, Kings with Spears, and the Survival of Diversity in Madagascar*** by Alison Jolly (2004, Nonfiction). Alison Jolly, a primatologist with a focus on lemurs, explores the history and culture of Berenty, Madagascar as she studies the area's local lemurs.

***Over the Lip of the World: Among the Storytellers of Madagascar*** by Collen J. McElroy (1999, Cultural Nonfiction). A collection of Malagasy stories through the eyes of an African American travel writer as she explores the island nation.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### South Africa

***Searching for Sugar Man*** (2013, Documentary) Winner of the 2013 Academy Award for Best Documentary. Sixto Rodriguez, a Detroit rock musician, had a disappointing career in the U.S. But unbeknownst to him (thanks to the closed society of apartheid-era South Africa), he had become a sensation in South Africa, where his music influenced many activists. Sixto only learned of his huge following when determined fans set out to confirm whether rumors of Sixto's death were true. A feel-good comeback story with a great soundtrack.

***Tsotsi*** (2005, Drama) This is the only South African film to have won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Adapted from the 1980 novel by Athol Fugard, it follows the travails of David, a young Johannesburg tsotsi (thug) who finds himself the caregiver of baby after a carjacking.

***Invictus*** (2009, Drama) Director Clint Eastwood tells the story of how Nelson Mandela used the 1995 World Cup rugby matches to unite the people of South Africa.

***Zulu*** (1964, Drama). This classic, rousing adventure recounts the true story of how a small regiment of 150 British troops held off an overwhelming number of 4,000 Zulu in 1879. The film depicts the Zulu army as worthy adversaries admired for their discipline and strategy. Starring Sir Stanley Baker (who also produced) and Michael Caine in his first major screen role.

***Breaker Morant*** (1980, Drama). Brilliant recounting of events that transpired during South Africa's Boer War revolving around the court martial of three Australian lieutenants—with lots of parallels to modern warfare.

### Namibia

***Baxu and the Giants*** (2019, Drama/Family). A short film about Baxu, a 9-year-old girl, and her family in a small Namibian village as poachers arrive, looking for the nearby rhinos she holds dear to her, disrupting her life and her family.

***Katutura*** (2015, Action/Drama). Three different people, an ex-convict, a gangster, and a disabled teenager, are forced into each other's paths as they struggle to live out their dreams, faced with crime, drug abuse, and violence, in the Katutura township.

***Namibia: The Struggle for Liberation*** (2007, History/Drama). Based off of the defeat of the South African army in 1987 that led to creation of Namibia as a separate country, follow Sam Nujoma, the leader of the South West Africa People's Organization and the first President of Namibia, as he dives into politics and strives to grant Namibia its freedom.

## Zimbabwe

**Cook Off** (2017, Romantic Comedy) An all-Zimbabwean cast stars in this delightful romcom about a single mom who finds love and good fortune as a contestant on a television cooking show contest. This is one of only a handful of films produced in Zimbabwe since the turn of the century. Made on a shoestring budget of \$8,000, it is the first feature film made here to be offered on a streaming service (Netflix).

**White Hunter, Black Heart** (1990, Drama) Clint Eastwood produced, directed, and starred in this film about a famous director, John Wilson, shooting on location in Africa. To the dismay of his cast and crew, Wilson neglects his film duties and becomes obsessed with shooting elephants, despite his recognition that killing for sport is “a sin.” This is a thinly veiled account of the filming of John Huston’s classic, *The African Queen*. It was shot in and around Lake Kariba, Victoria Falls, and Hwange.

**King Solomon’s Mines** (1985, Comedy/Adventure) Based on the classic H. Rider Haggard novel, this version of the story takes a comedic approach and was meant to parody Spielberg’s Indiana Jones franchise. Hero Allan Quatermaine is hired to find an archaeologist who was lost during an expedition to find a legendary treasure. Filmed outside of the capital, Harare.

## Botswana

**A United Kingdom** (2013, Drama) David Oyelowo and Rosamund Pike star in this true story about Botswana’s first president, Sir Seretse Khama, and his English wife Ruth Williams. When they married in the 1948, both their families objected and their union was challenged by both the South African and British governments.

**The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency** (2008, Mystery) After the death of her father, Precious Ramotswe (singer Jill Scott) moves to Gabarone to become the first female detective in all of Botswana. But will anyone hire her?

**The Gods Must Be Crazy** (1980, Comedy) Xi, a Kalahari tribesman, finds a Coca Cola bottle in the desert. When he brings it back to his village, it causes ridiculous arguments, so he embarks on a journey to rid the tribe of the mysterious object. Along the way he meets western teachers, policemen, scientists, and political guerrillas, and discovers a world even more absurd than the one he left behind. Though a South African production, the film is set in Botswana.

## Madagascar

**Fahavalo, Madagascar 1947** (2018, Documentary). The documentary follows the Malagasy Uprising of 1947, against the island’s French colonial rule.

**Island of Lemurs: Madagascar** (2014, Documentary). Lemurs, cute primates made famous by the DreamWorks *Madagascar* movie franchise, can only be found on Madagascar, and some nearby neighboring islands. *Island of Lemurs: Madagascar* display the endangered primates in their natural habitat, in all their adorable glory.

**The Malagasy Way** (Documentary, 2014). Focused on the lives of the people of Madagascar, *The Malagasy Way* highlights how the Malagasy reject Western ideals of waste and overconsumption in favor of recycling and self-reliance. Using music and theater, learn about culture and life on Madagascar.

## Useful Websites

### **Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### **International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### **Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### **Foreign Exchange Rates**

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### **ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### **World Weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### **Basic Travel Phrases** (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### **Packing Tips**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### **U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)**

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### **National Passport Information Center**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps or Maps.me**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber or Bolt or Grab**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App or Skype or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

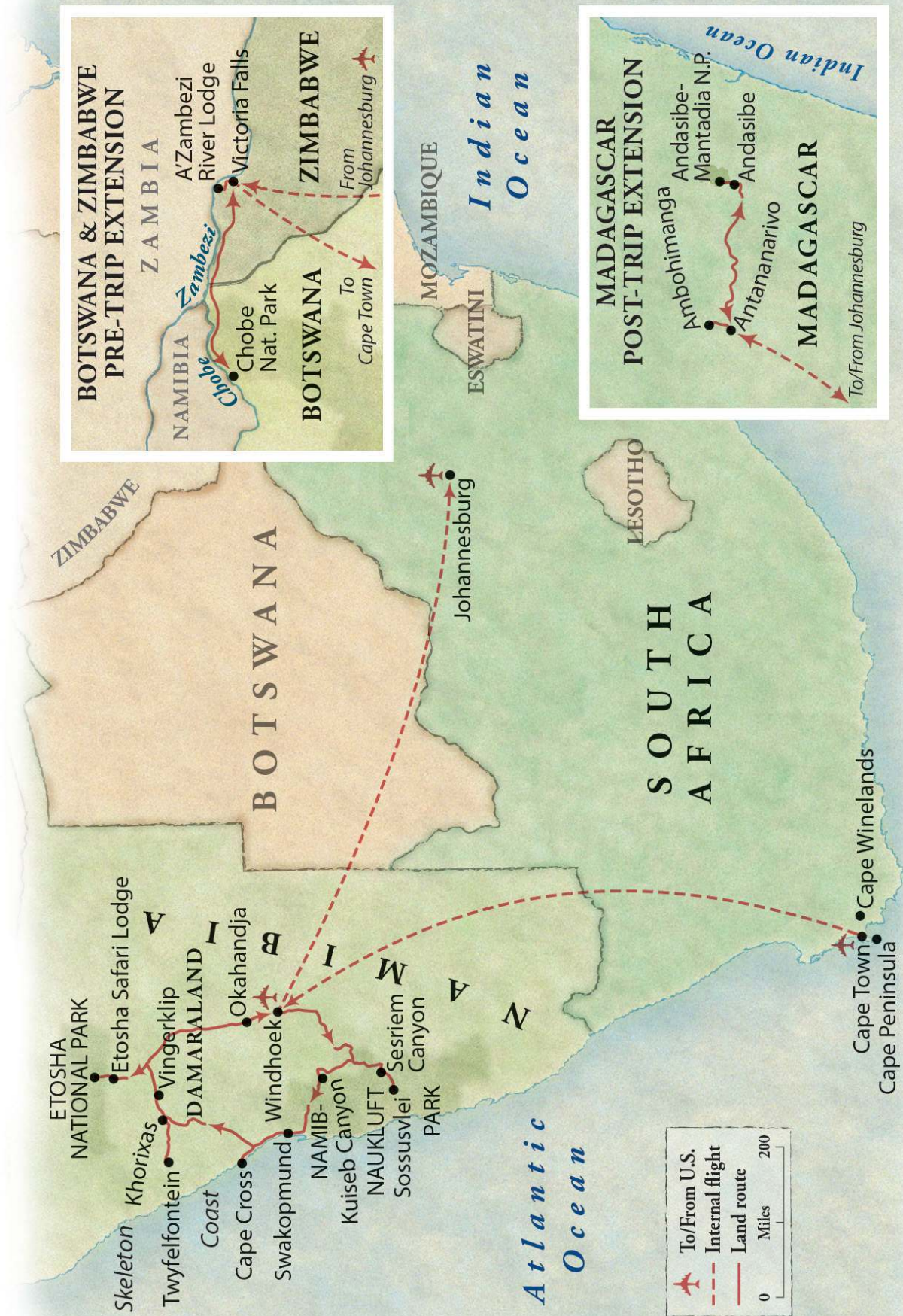
### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

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