

## Adding a Vacation to your Time in Botswana

It takes both a lot of time and money to get to Botswana and understandably, Penn travelers may wish to use the opportunity of being in Africa to take a vacation.

However, please note: BUP staff are NOT travel agents. Asking the Philly staff about where you should stay in the Okavango or Vic Falls makes us cranky since we have probably never been there. This is true of most Botswana with whom you will work too. Recognize that these "side trips" are for most people incredible luxuries. Travel and safari information is readily available online. If you want to find out where to go, do a little research online or buy a travel guide; ask other clinical rotators; or talk to a travel agent.

Students participating in a funded educational program and anyone in Botswana on a Global Health rotation must understand that you are expected to work full-time Monday through Friday and are not permitted to cut into regular work time to make flights for long-weekend vacation trips. That said, there are a number of holidays during which you are free to travel.

Botswana holidays include:

Date	Holiday
1 January	New Year's Day
2 January	Public Holiday
Varies	Good Friday
	Easter Monday
Varies	Ascension Day
1 May	May Labour Day
1 July	Sir Seretse Khama Day
19 July	President's Day
20 July	Public Holiday
30 September	Independence Day
1 October	
25 December	Christmas
26 December/27 December	Boxing Day

With most trips mentioned below, there are options for lavish living, budget living, and camping. Note that nearly all safari trips are quite lavish. In Botswana this is done purposefully as high-end safaris inject a lot of money into local economies and safari lodges

usually employ a greater number of citizens with less wear-and-tear on the game parks themselves. (Tourism is one of main parts of Botswana—and regional—economy.

### **Chobe Game Preserve/Victoria Falls**

Located in northeast part of Botswana, Chobe has the highest concentration of elephants in Africa. The evening sundowner cruise on the Chobe River is a must but please request a large boat. (Small dugout canoes are too dangerous with hippos and crocs in the water.) The sunsets are amazing and you will see the game in a totally different environment. Elephants swim across the river and the hippos wallow in their pods. The Chobe River Lodge has self catering chalets with either 2 or 3 beds.

If you do not want to self cater, the Garden Lodge and the Mowana Lodge are other options.

Day trips to Victoria Falls are also available. (Note for Victoria Falls – Visitors are advised to stay on the Zambian side of the falls while the political situation in Zimbabwe remains tense.) The market there is amazing and you can literally barter your shirt to your shoes.

### **Cape Town, South Africa**

Cape Town is a popular vacation destination with Table Mountain, the waterfront, penguins, a working harbor; Robben Island, the former home of Nelson Mandela and other Apartheid prisoners; the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, and the Cape Town Wine Routes, where some of the world's best wines are produced. Many flights to Botswana go through Cape Town so it may be possible to arrange a layover either en route or on your way home.

### **Kalahari Camping Trip/Khutse Game Reserve, Botswana**

Khutse is the gateway to the Kalahari. A weekend camping in the Kalahari is a life-altering experience, but camping is pricey. You should absolutely not go camping without an experienced guide. There are lions and other animals that make it too dangerous for a novice to be out there alone. Many Penn travelers have gone with Tim Race who leads outstanding camping trips to the Kalahari and has all of the necessary equipment.

There is a new lodge just outside of Khutse that is very nice and the place to go if you are not a camper or if you cannot arrange for a camping trip. Remember always go with more than one vehicle and an experienced guide.

### **Johannesburg, South Africa**

Johannesburg is five hours by car from Gaborone. Make sure you get a very detailed map if you drive there, as street signs are nearly nonexistent, and it is very easy to get lost (and your trip could be several hours longer than intended. The northern suburbs are beautiful and safe, but Johannesburg proper is also known to be very dangerous, so be careful.

There are great restaurants and great B&Bs in Johannesburg. Some activities you might try include taking a Soweto Township tour, visiting the Apartheid Museum, or other assorted cultural activities. Remember that the Tlokweng border closes at 22:00.

### **Madikwe Game Reserve**

Located right over the border from Gaborone in South Africa, is an absolutely fabulous (and romantic) weekend getaway to a game reserve. You must make reservations ahead but there are many lodging options and prices, though none that are "cheap."

Lodging options include Makanyane (very expensive), Tau, Madikwe River Camp, and Jack's Tree House (a little less expensive). Madikwe is well worth the expense! Just outside of Madikwe is Masela Sela at a far more reasonable price, which includes a game drive each day + an extra one if you pay for it. Ask Gill for advice about options regarding expense. Most people prefer to stay in the park. You can view the lodges at: [www.madikwesafaris.com](http://www.madikwesafaris.com). Gill has arranged a special Penn rate at Tau and often gets "last minute" rates with some of the others.

### **Okavango Delta**

This inland delta is the biggest tourist attraction in Botswana. The camps in the delta are also quite expensive, but are all-inclusive and are perhaps the most unique part of Botswana. There are great animals, birds, and wonderful night sounds of tree frogs. Camps are usually quite lavish. To visit, you must fly to Maun and then generally take a Cessna into one of the camps.

### **Pretoria**

Located on the way to Johannesburg, but an hour closer to Gaborone, is the South African city of Pretoria. Pretoria has an excellent zoo, and the Kruger museum provides an excellent overview of South African history. Pretoria is known as the Jacaranda City because of the proliferation of Jacaranda trees. The city actually appears a purplish blue from the hills overlooking the city when the Jacaranda is in bloom in the spring. It is quite a sight to behold.

### **Tuli Game Reserve**

This is not the usual tourist area in Botswana, but has excellent sites and a few great lodges, the Tuli Safari Lodge and Mashatu to name but two. The scenery is beautiful just at the border of Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa and only a six hour drive West of Gaborone. This is a good place to visit over a Bank Holiday weekend provided you book in advance. Tell them you are with the Penn program and they will give you "resident rates!" One can stay inexpensively in a great tent site on the banks of the Limpopo River. [www.tulilodge.com](http://www.tulilodge.com)

### **Tsodilo, Botswana**

Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Tsodilo has been called the "Louvre of the Desert" with one of the highest concentrations of rock art in the world. Over 4,500 paintings are preserved in an area of only 10 km squared in 2 of the Kalahari Desert. The archaeological record of the area gives a chronological account of human activities and environmental changes over at least 100,000 years. Local communities in this hostile environment respect Tsodilo as a place of worship frequented by ancestral spirits. Tsodilo is located in the northwest corner of Botswana at the beginning of the Okavango Delta, close to Namibia and Angola.