

## **10 Minute Culture and Safety Orientation**

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### **Top Tips for Not Being an “Ugly American” in Botswana**

1. Know that “g’s” are pronounced as “h’s” in Botswana and an “e” on the end of a proper noun is usually NOT silent. The capital city is pronounced “Hab-ohrrr-own-eee.” The flats are located at “Pil-ahn-eee” Court.
2. Greet people. It is proper to greet everyone you encounter before anything else. You say “Dumela Mma” to women and “Dumela Rra” to men.
3. Don’t shout or talk loudly. Remember that if someone does not understand you, it does not usually help to increase your volume. Be particularly careful if working in the hospital that you do not speak too loudly which can be interpreted as shouting.
4. Recognize that you are a guest. It is impolite for guests to demand things of their hosts.
5. Remember that one person from Botswana is referred to as a “Motswana” and all citizens of the Republic of Botswana are collectively “Batswana.” “Tswana” is used as an adjective - for example “Tswana state” or “Tswana culture”.
6. Acknowledge that you are in Botswana primarily to LEARN. You are not there to change the system. Thinking that you even can change a system in a few weeks is vain and misguided. You will have a most successful trip if you leave Botswana having learned something new about a culture, a country, and a way of doing things, along with perhaps learning something about yourself.
7. Learn a little about the history of Botswana before you go. Batswana are understandably proud of their country’s admirable history of democracy, peace, good governance, and growth.
8. Accept that you are in Botswana to do good work, but not to “do good.” Penn’s mission in Botswana is an educational one. If you are thinking of this as a humanitarian trip or volunteer work, you are probably thinking about it the wrong way. We work with our partners in Botswana for mutual benefit and educational exchange; we are not giving more than we receive.
9. If you get into a jam—whether it be lost luggage, a stolen passport, missed flight, or wonky electric at the flats—be patient but persistent, and *kind* in your dealings with people who are in a position to help. Do not be demanding because this will most likely get you nowhere. Problems generally take longer to resolve in Botswana but they do generally work out.

## Top Tips for Keeping You and Your Stuff Safe Traveling to and in Africa

1. Look both ways before crossing the street. They drive on the left!
2. Do NOT leave gates, doors, windows, or car doors unlocked, EVER.
3. Do not ride on any roads after dark and do not ride with anyone who has been drinking. Vehicle accidents are the fifth leading cause of death in Botswana. (HIV/AIDS related illnesses are the first.)
4. Think twice about taking any valuables to Botswana. If you must take a laptop, take a laptop lock so you can lock it to a table or bed when unattended.
5. Do not walk on the paths in Gaborone alone at night.
6. DO buy traveler's insurance for your goods and valuables.
7. Do not jog while wearing an ear buds. Do not walk while talking on a cell phone. Stay alert and pay attention to your surroundings.
8. Do not swim in any bodies of water. In the game reserves, they may be inhabited by crocodiles or hippos (which kill more people than any other animal in Africa except the mosquito). Even in water known to not have wildlife, you are at risk of contracting Schistosomiasis (bilharzia).
9. Do not carry your cell phone, camera, or wallet in the pocket of a backpack on your back or in loose pockets or unzipped purses.
10. Do not have unprotected sex with anyone whose HIV status you do not know.
11. Be sure to have the International SOS phone number (1-215-942-8226) and Penn ID number (11BSGC000012) with you in the event that you need a medical evacuation.
12. Do NOT go camping without a guide. There are lions, hyenas, and mosquitoes who may wish to snack on you. Or while sleeping you could get trod on by an elephant or antelope herd. There are also 12 venomous snakes native to Botswana including black mamba, puff adder, and boomslang. Camping in Botswana requires an experienced bush guide and special equipment (like a lion-proof tent).
13. Make sure that someone knows where you are going if you decide to leave town. Students and residents should inform Nikki Jones if they make any overnight trips outside of Gaborone or fly anywhere.
14. Scan each page of your passport and email it to yourself so you can access a copy if you lose it or if it is stolen.