

WELCOME TO FRANCISTOWN



Francistown is the second city of Botswana. It has a very different historical and cultural background to the remainder of the country. The original population here were Kalanga - people related to the Shona tribe in Zimbabwe. But in the streets of Francistown you will hear many different languages – Ikalanga and Setswana of course, but also Shona, Ndebele, Lozi, and Bemba. Francistown is an important trading centre and has attracted many people from the neighbouring countries.



Francistown was built on gold and the railway. The Tati District was the site of the first gold rush in Africa, and this attracted hopefuls from all over the world – even from as far away as New Zealand – and some of them stayed. The gold rush was over long before the railway arrived in 1897, though gold mining has continued to the present day. But from the outset the embryonic city was effectively a foreign enclave in what was then some of the wildest country in Africa.



This is reflected in the layout of the town centre, built on a grid pattern instead of the usual and confusing semicircular pattern favoured by the Tswana. The streets are named after local identities from the early years: Blue Jacket Street after an Australian prospector named Sam 'BlueJacket' Anderson; Haskins Street after the British trader James Haskins, who established the Haskins trading dynasty here in 1897; and Baines Avenue after Thomas Baines, one of the most prolific Victorian era explorers in Africa. Baines toured the Tati District in 1869.



Francistown is emphatically **not** a tourist town. For most it is a place to find a bed for the night; to catch up on vehicle maintenance; and to stock up on supplies. But there are many interesting things to do here regardless.

When you are in Francistown you can:

- **Climb Nyangabgwe Hill** for a panoramic view over the city and surrounding countryside. A popular walk for the locals, who like to view the sunset from the summit
- Walk a trail designed for birdwatchers near the Tati River.





Take your pick of the **golf courses**: there are three close by, including one which is a highly manicured golf and spa resort, and another in which the course is cropped by impala and zebra.



- Launch your boat or just take a picnic at the **Sailing Club** on the Shashe Dam
- Take a lesson on traditional Kalanga cooking. The **Kalanga cuisine** is very different to that of the other tribal groups in the country.
- Look at the rocks of the Archaean Tati **greenstone belt**
- Visit a **crocodile farm**, which raises thousands of Nile crocodiles and also breeds leopard tortoise. You can get up close and personal with the animals. A real winner with children.



- Visit the Supa Ngwao Museum (a branch of the National Museum), largely devoted to mining and railway history
- See the original buildings of the 'Government Enclave', built when the Tati District was annexed to the Bechuanaland Protectorate after the second Matabele War.



- Ride a horse through the deserted, 8000 ha Tachila Nature Reserve. The animals here include leopard, hyena, kudu, impala, bushbuck, steenbok, klipspringer, hyrax and warthog. It's an area of open forest studded with small granite hills.
- Take your children to the Central Park playground. Typically a 'playground' in Botswana is a football field. But Central Park is a real **children's playground**, much loved by local families. And there are big shady trees and picnic facilities too.

Catch up with the **Mazezuru** – followers of a Shona prophet. The sect venerates skilled craftsmanship, and you will find their womenfolk selling beautiful and functional metal items on the roadside in various parts of town. Very obvious from their white or light pink flowing clothes and head scarves.





- Check out the street market in Haskins Street – in fact walk the whole length of the street if you have time. This is a **traditional international market** – a place where people from at least four nations bring their produce and wares and haggle over bargains to take back home. A lively, colourful and friendly scene; and you will see bulging bags being stuffed onto buses and lorries heading for Zimbabwe, Zambia, and even the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Watch a home game of the Township Rollers, one of the top **football clubs** in Botswana; and check out the sporting action at the modern Francistown Stadium.



- Drive N to visit the a stone walled archaeological site in the Great Zimbabwe tradition, managed by the National Museum
- Experience Kalanga food, music and dance at the Domboshaba festival, held each September. This is a colorful and lively event aimed at promoting **Kalanga culture**.
- Take a lesson on traditional **mud hut building** techniques. A traditional hut is a work of art, beautifully decorated, and there are classes aimed at keeping the traditions alive.