

# WELCOME TO PALAPYE & TSWAPONG

Palapye is a central place in Eastern Botswana with ready access to land, water, coal, electricity and the main trunk railway line. In short, a really good place to encourage industrial development. And this is exactly what the Botswana government has tried to do. The growth of Gaborone has threatened to outstrip her resources, so why not encourage development somewhere else ?

Modern industrial towns don't attract many tourists. But there is something else here.

Palapye has steadily grown to the west and the north, leaving much of the original village of 'Palapye Road' behind. The original airfield, built in 1919, is still in use. The first petrol station in town, which probably refueled the Graetz 'drive across Africa' expedition in 1911 is still there, the bowsers sitting overgrown and idle. The R.A. Baileys hardware store, built in 1896, is still in business today, largely unchanged.

And there is an even older Palapye, now known as 'Old Palapye', preserved a short distance away. This was the capital of the Bamangwato Kingdom in the late 19th Century, abandoned in 1902 and now preserved as a national monument.

So Palapye is a curious mix of the old and the new and there is a surprising amount to see.

Palapye is also the gateway to the Tswapong Hills – a 70 km long block of ancient sandstone reaching almost as far as the Limpopo River. The hills are heavily forested, full of wildlife, deeply dissected with gorges and waterfalls, and largely undiscovered by tourists. You can stay in sleepy picturesque villages, and you can hike the old trails over the hills between them.



The Tswapong Hills are a proposed UNESCO cultural heritage site and once you have been there you will understand why.

In Palapye itself you can...

- View an old **Bailey Bridge** across the Lotsane River, and learn about the contribution of the Bechuanaland Protectorate to WW2. Fiercely pro-British, the Batswana made the largest contribution of men (in proportion to population) of any African nation.
- See one of the first two **airfields** in Africa to be built by an African tribe, and learn about the history of aviation in Bechuanaland. The first aeroplane landed here in 1920 and an airmail service began in 1922.. The story of the first landing could be straight from the Boy's Own annual.



- Visit the replica of the original Railway Station, built as a **movie set** for 'A United Kingdom'.
- **Explore** the relics of the early days of the Cape to Cairo Railroad, including the relics of the original construction camp.
- Listen to Afrojazz. Sunday night is **Jazz night** at the historic Palapye Hotel, which also features an amazing collection of old photographs of the town.





- Learn about the **Self Help Housing** scheme which helps the poor to build their own houses
- Read about the North South Connector Pipeline, the largest engineering project ever undertaken in Botswana, and see it heading for the horizon from a vantage point on Khurumela Hill.
- Take the family for a **swim** at the popular Little Paws events venue and picnic ground
- **Cycle** the pipeline service road to the Bonwakathako Dam and beyond. The surrounds of the dam are an excellent spot for **birdwatching**.
- Let your children race on a virtual reality motorbike whilst you enjoy a **good cup of coffee**. if you don't need the motorbike, head for a secluded garden café in the middle of town run by a local chef and his Mozambican wife for even better coffee and some unique food.



And in the Tswapong Hills you can:



- **Hike for days** following the old trails through the hills
- Visit a **prehistoric iron smelting site** where mining and smelting was carried out on an industrial scale
- Visit the grave of the beloved Bamangwato queen MmaBesi, carried off by malaria in 1889, and learn about the **history of malaria control** in Botswana
- Search for the rare **Jameson's rock hare** in a rocky gorge
- Call on the potters of Manaledi. The Batswapong traditionally made huge **pottery jars** as storage vessels for the annual harvest, and in this village they are still doing it





- Visit a breeding colony of Cape Vultures.



- Walk or cycle amongst the wildlife alongside the Limpopo River, and search for the nocturnal bush pigs.
- See the hill occupied by a Bangwato regiment in 1899, a move that stopped the northern thrust of Boer forces into Bechuanaland dead in its tracks.
- Take the picturesque route over the hills to Moeng, and walk part of the abandoned road built by the long-serving Bamangwato regent, Tshekedi Khama.
- Explore the picturesque Moremi Gorge and learn about the **culture and traditions of the Batswapong**. Moremi Village have built their own tourist attraction to showcase their village, their culture and their spectacular natural heritage, and they are very proud of their achievements.



- Visit the site of Old Palapye and explore the shady gorges in the company of a National Museum guide.



- Take a tour of the attractive but sleepy hill village of Malaka on horseback
- Go birdwatching at the spring fed Lecheng Pan



- See a slice of earth history preserved in the **1.8 billion year old freshwater sandstones**. The Tswapong Hills were once an ancient lake, thought to have been about the size of modern Lake Victoria.
- By prior arrangement, call in to Segaiyai Farm, the physical home of our company, and **enjoy a cup of tea and a chat** with the people who have organised your journey.