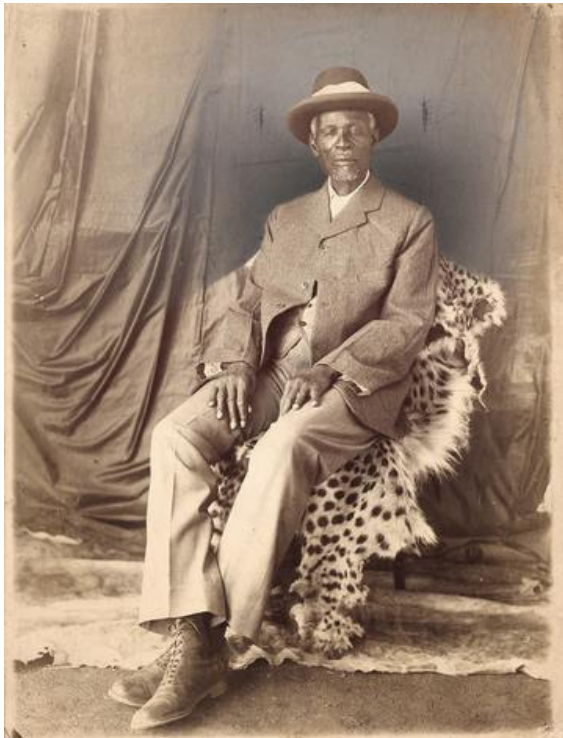


# WELCOME TO SEROWE

Serowe is the tribal capital of the Bangwato, the most influential of the tribes of Botswana.

The Bangwato have produced three of the five presidents of Botswana to date, and also played a pivotal role in the affairs of the Bechuanaland Protectorate through such notable chiefs as Khama III and Tshekedi Khama, the long-serving tribal regent. The Bangwato always saw the Protectorate as a partnership between equals, and carved out a unique relationship with imperial Britain. Britain needed the goodwill of the Bangwato just as much as the Bangwato needed the protection of the British.



*Khama III (L) And Tshekedi Khama I (R) – giants of Bechuanaland Protectorate politics*

Khama III had a very strong popular following in England, and is one of the very few African chiefs of the 19th and early 20th Century to have had multiple biographers. So Serowe is a place redolent with political history, and in terms of national and international attention for the first 75 years of the 20th Century Serowe simply had no rivals within Botswana. But there is much more to Serowe than tribal and national politics.

Whilst you are here you can:

Check out the history

Serowe hosts one of the National Museum of Botswana regional museums. The museum has interesting displays; and it is also a beacon for historical researchers as it houses the archives of the Ngwato Tribe. In fact it was established in the house built for the tribal regent.

But the best thing about the museum is that it provides very knowledgeable guides who will take you on a personalized tour of many of the historical sites. Some of these sites, like the Ngwato Royal Cemetery and the London Missionary Society church are difficult to access without their assistance. The Ngwato Royal Cemetery is not to be missed, and it includes the grave of Sir Seretse Khama, the founding President of Botswana.

Serowe also played a pivotal role in the clandestine operations to smuggle anti-apartheid activists out of South Africa.

A tour will take 2 to 3 hours and you will get to see much of Serowe.

There are other historical sites not included in the Museum tour and we provide guide notes to get you to these.

Check out the film locations

Many scenes from the movie 'A United Kingdom' telling the story of Sir Seretse Khama and his English wife Ruth were filmed in Serowe, and you can visit some of the locations where they were filmed.



*The house of Sekgoma II, restored for use in the movie*

## Enjoy the nightlife

In truth there is very little in Serowe itself, though there will be a concert of some sort every month or two, occasionally featuring some of the local traditional guitarists who play in a style unique to Botswana. The bright young things of Serowe head for a nightclub in Paje, a picturesque village a little out of town, which has the best vibes around. All are welcome there. The other spot popular with young people is the historic Serowe Hotel.

## See rhinos and other desert wildlife from an ordinary car

Poaching saw rhinos all but disappear from Botswana in the late 20th Century, and for a time they held on only at the 4300 ha Khama Rhino Sanctuary near Serowe. The community banded together to provide a safe haven for them in 1990. It remains a community run wildlife sanctuary to this day.

The Sanctuary has a network of vehicle tracks, and some can be driven in a high clearance 2 wheel drive car. If conditions are against you the Sanctuary also has 4x4 game drive vehicles and you can easily organize to go for a drive with one of the rangers. But sometimes you don't need to drive anywhere to see a rhino – last time one of us was there a rhino ambled over to watch us eating our lunch at the restaurant.



All the usual denizens of the Kalahari desert are here: wildebeest, springbok, kudu, giraffe, brown hyaena, spotted genet, bat eared fox, black backed jackal and leopards, but there are no lions and no elephants. Most of the animals are quite habituated to seeing human visitors.

## Explore the prehistory.

Modern Serowe was settled in 1902, when Khama III decided to move his capital from Old Palapye. It was established on the site of an 11th century village, and there are other old village sites nearby which date back further. These are preserved as National Monuments.

But Serowe has been occupied for a very long time indeed: stone tools found in the bed of the Metsemasweu date back to the Early Stone Age and were presumably made by *Homo erectus*, one of our hominid ancestors. Unfortunately the Metsemasweu site has been overtaken by the expansion of the village and has not been preserved.

## Listen to the roar of racing motorbikes

Every September Serowe hosts the MmaBesi 200 National Offroad challenge, which features offroad racing for both trail bikes and quad bikes. The track and the date varies from year to year. The event is organized by the **Serowe Extreme Bikers Club**, a bunch of local offroad motorsport enthusiasts.



If you are into motorsports, the MmaBesi 200 is the dirtbike event of the year in Botswana. The Serowe Extreme Bikers Club also organise other smaller social events during the year and you can find them on Facebook.

## Take a look at the local cattle industry

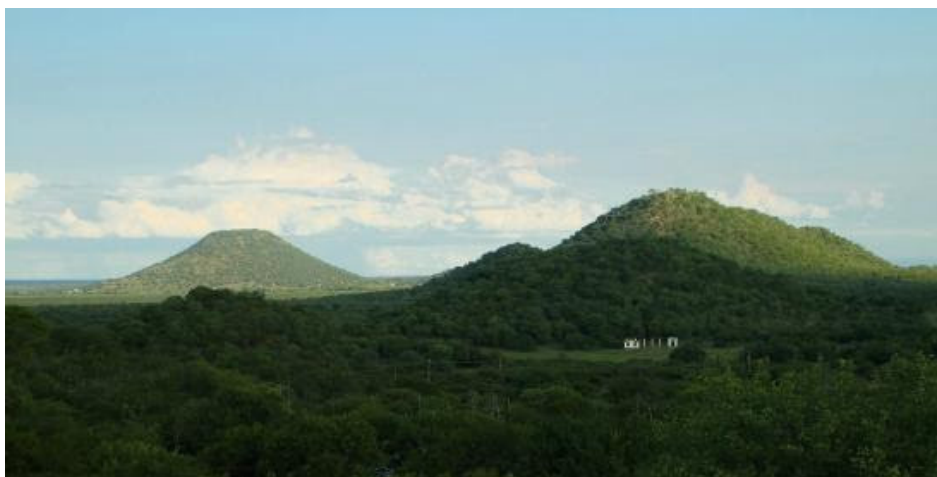
All Batswana have a love affair with cattle. The Bangwato take this to extremes. In times past an Ngwato chief would be buried in his kraal so he could hear the hooves of his cattle overhead for eternity. And so the cattle section of the **Serowe Agricultural Show** always draws a big crowd. The show is held each winter and runs for several days. There is something for everyone at the show: amusements for the children; displays of local produce; trade displays; live music and food.



Outside of show time, there is a small 'feedlot' outside Serowe which caters for visitors. There is a lovely garden for picnics; an associated campsite; and the opportunity to see a variety of cattle breeds, including some unknown in other parts of the world. This is aimed at local visitors rather than foreign tourists but all are welcome, and if you are interested in cattle you will always find someone to talk to.

## Climb the hills

Serowe is built around a series of hills. Some have walking tracks to their summits, and all provide panoramic views. One of the hills has a very well preserved 19th Century hill-fort on the summit.



## Check out the local geology.

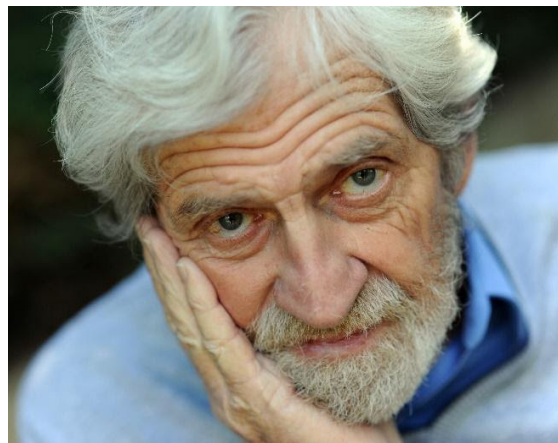
The distinctive landforms of Serowe reflect the underlying geology. This area is covered with a thick layer of continental flood basalt from the Karoo-Ferrar eruptions of the lower Jurassic, which precipitated the Toarcian mass extinction event.



There is a local river gorge with good exposures of the basalts and the large feldspar crystals formed within them. There are also several examples of columnar basalt within the village boundaries. Slightly further to the S there are trace fossils of Proterozoic Age; and to the N there are large deposits of uranium ore – in fact one of the ten largest unexploited uranium deposits in the world.

## Follow in the Footsteps of Patrick van Rensburg

Patrick van Rensburg was a South African born anti-apartheid activist and educator. He fled from South Africa to Swaziland in 1960. Serowe was an important staging post in the 'refugee pipeline' in at the time and many anti-apartheid refugees were passing through. But Patrick didn't pass through – he settled here in 1962. South Africa's loss was Botswana's gain, as Patrick was not only a visionary, but also a talented fundraiser, motivator and organizer.





In the 1960's Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world. But within a few years of arrival Patrick had established three secondary schools; a national newspaper; an educational movement called 'Education with Production'; and a number of other projects including a community hotel. Remarkably most of his initiatives succeeded, and are still in operation 50 years later.

Patrick van Rensburg died in his beloved Serowe in 2017. In his lifetime his ideas and works spread throughout Botswana and to other parts of the developing world. But the ideas and the pilot projects all started here in Serowe. If you are interested in education, social policy or development take our self drive excursion to learn about his life and works.

### Watch a village soccer match

Serowe is divided into many wards. Each has their own kgotla and their own football team. In times past a ward was basically a patrilineal unit, and most of the inhabitants would be related by blood or marriage to the headman so competitions were almost a matter of family honour. Nowadays the genetic links within a ward are not so strong, but the feeling of 'belonging' to a ward is still very real.

There are more than 150 wards, so every Saturday of the year there will be football matches in progress. The ward football teams are competing enthusiastically for the Vuyo and Malefho Cups.

This is not professional football – there is no merchandise on sale; no scoreboards; and no grandstand. All the players will be playing for the love of the game, and the crowd will be shouting themselves hoarse. Village football is football as it should be. Anyone can go along to watch, and tourists are made very welcome.



## Listen to some traditional music

President's Day, Independence Day and Sir Seretse Khama Day are all public holidays in Botswana. All are celebrated with musical competitions. The competitions are for traditional singers, dancers, guitarists and other musicians. The President's Day competitions are broadcast nationally on the BTV channel. But in Serowe Sir Seretse Khama day has a special resonance as this was Seretse Khama's home town. Before becoming the founding President of Botswana he was the Kgosikolo or Paramount Chief of the Ngwato, presiding over the main kgotla in Serowe.

Sir Seretse Khama Day is celebrated on his birthday each year on July 1. If you are in Serowe on the day this is an event not to be missed. The competitions are not staged for tourists, and the proceedings will be in Setswana, but all are welcome and if you look bewildered someone will take pity, sit down beside you and translate.



*A crowd gathered at the Serowe main kgotla for Sir Seretse Khama Day*