

# WELCOME TO THE A1 & A3 HIGHWAYS



It is possible to drive from Gaborone to Francistown in 6 hours, and even have time to stop for coffee along the way. The road is excellent, and the speed limit is 120 km/h.

At Francistown the A1 swings east towards the Zimbabwean border. Northbound traffic takes the A3 to Nata. Many tourists drive the 621 km from Gaborone to Nata (and beyond) in a single day, stopping only to eat their lunch along the way. And this is unfortunate because there is a great deal to see and do *en route*. So why not make the journey the destination, and experience what the countryside traversed by these roads has to offer ?

Each of the activities mentioned below involve no more than a one hour detour along the way, and we provide our clients with detailed guide notes on all of them.

There is, of course, much, much more to do in Palapye, the Tswapong Hills and Francistown, all of which are along the way. See the separate pages on these, and if you can, plan to spread the journey over several days.






- Visit the hill chosen for the last stand of the Bechuanaland forces during the **Boer War** in 1899. The Boers had counted on a swift victory, but had not counted on the implacable hostility of the well-armed Bamangwato Kingdom.
- Visit a grasscutters cooperative and learn about the making of **traditional brooms and thatched roofs**.



- Take a selfie at the **Tropic of Capricorn** monument to send home to your friends
- Explore the **ghost town** of old Phala Road and learn about the rinderpest epizootic of the late 19th Century, and the colourful past of the Bechuanaland beef cattle trade.
- Stop at a natural amphitheatre created by an abandoned railway quarry. The clear waters of the quarry pit are home to **turtles and waterbirds**. The rocky hillside is patrolled by hyrax and vervet monkeys, and raptors soar above. The quarry provides an excellent exposure of the **ancient rocks** of the Limpopo mobile belt.



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- Learn about the history of the **railroad**. The main line through Botswana runs parallel to the A1. It was a section of the proposed 'Cape to Cairo' railway line promoted by Cecil Rhodes, and there are a number of railway related sites along the way.
  - Shop at a roadside **farmer's market** for unfamiliar local vegetables and wild fruits.
  - Venture down the Sowa Spit into the heart of the gigantic Sua Pan. The road is tarred all the way to the Botash Soda Ash plant at its tip. Much of the way you are driving through a game reserve. Unfortunately you can't easily reach the water's edge here because of the lions.



- Take a stroll in the bed of the river where **diamonds were first discovered** in Botswana.
- Shop for **African carvings and artefacts** near the famous Dukwi refugee camp. Botswana has been a safe haven for tens of thousands of refugees from troubles in other African countries, and you will find some of them beside the A3 selling carvings and art objects typical of their homelands. Take the time to stop and talk.





- See the rocks of the huge Dukwi aquifer exposed in the bed of the river near Moseitse. This aquifer is what makes life and agriculture possible in this arid and salty area. The wells of the Dukwi wellfield can be seen alongside the A3.
- Turn into the **Bird Sanctuary** at Nata. This provides road access right to the northern shore of the Sua Pan. You can go there to watch the enormous flocks of flamingo; or simply to enjoy the infinity view of this vast pan of salty water. The saltgrass plain surrounding the pan is home to wildebeest, ostrich, brown hyaena, aardwolf and bat eared fox. You can drive to the Pan's edge, at least in dry conditions, but the Sanctuary is even better explored by bicycle.



- Find **ancient rocks** from the Kapvaal and Zimbabwe cratons and the Tati greenstone belt, along with the 2 billion year old sandstones and shales derived from them. A geologist's paradise.
- **Hike or cycle** the tracks alongside the Nata River. The river plays an important part in the lives of the locals, and you will find them making mud bricks; digging wells; watering cattle and fishing, or just sitting under the big shady trees and watching the world go by. If the river is full you can also hire a kayak.





- Learn about the disputed 'Tati Territory' a state within a state, sold by the ill-fated King Lobengula of Matabeleland, and the creation of the Tati Tribal Reserve. Concessions signed by Lobengula in the 19th Century still cast a shadow across this part of Botswana today.
- Explore the ruins of a 15th Century, stone walled village on a hilltop.



*This herringbone motif identifies a ruined building as the house of a Butua chief*

- Play a round of golf on a course grazed by antelope and zebra

You can't fit all of this into a 6 hour drive, so why not take it slowly and enjoy yourself ?