

WELCOME TO THE CHOBE ENCLAVE



The Chobe Enclave is a fascinating area of about 1700 km² sandwiched between the Chobe National Park, the Chobe Forest Reserve and the Chobe River. The river forms the border with Namibia.

To get to the Chobe Enclave you take the tarred A33 transit route through the Chobe National Park from Kasane to Ngoma. It pays to keep your eyes open as you drive through the transit route: it is difficult to avoid encountering elephants, giraffe and baboons.

When you reach the road junction at Ngoma you turn SW to the tiny village of Muchenje, home to a Puma petrol station. On the way between Ngoma and Muchenje the road descends the Chobe fault scarp, and the road cutting gives a good opportunity to look at the beautiful volcano-sedimentary rocks of the Ghanzi-Chobe orogenic belt. Elsewhere they are mainly covered by recent sediments.

There are five main villages in the Chobe Enclave: Mabele, Kavimba, Kachikau, Satau and Parakarungu. The first three are connected by an excellent but largely deserted tar road, the B334. Satau and Parakarungu are 9 and 30 km beyond Kachikau respectively on a gravel road: our experience is that this road is both corrugated and dusty, but both villages are accessible by 2WD car excepting in times of flood or after heavy rain.

The Enclave has approximately 3400 inhabitants. Agriculture mostly consists of extensive cattle grazing and small scale flood recession cropping, known locally as *molapo* farming.

Surrounded by species-rich protected areas, the humans and their cattle are greatly outnumbered by the wildlife herds during the dry season. A survey in 2011 counted 9003 elephants, 2443 buffaloes, 94 giraffes, 58 hippopotami and 1492 zebras. The impala, roan, sable and eland were not counted.

What to do in the Chobe Enclave

The Chobe Enclave is tailor made for cyclists and walkers. The B334 is largely flat, and it is tarred all the way to Kachikau. The road is usually more or less deserted.

In places the road climbs over a gentle spur, giving an expansive view of the floodplain. And excepting when the floodplain is flooded, the network of unpaved tracks out over the floodplain itself is available for exploration.

The floodplain between Kavimba and Satau is a scroll plain – that is to say a mosaic of dry land, oxbow lakes and back channels left behind by the river as it meanders its way across the flat terrain. This scroll plain provides ideal habitat for the wild herbivore population, with large expanses of grassland; plenty of water; and occasional groups of trees or palms on the drier ridges.



The Enclave is not part of the Chobe National Park. There is no-one to tell you that you must stay in your car, and no need to do so. There are zebra, impala and eland here grazing peacefully amongst the cattle. You can walk or cycle amongst them. Out on the floodplain there are oxbow lakes, swamps, and *mokola* palm thickets, and you can find an amazing diversity of birdlife along with occasional hippopotami and elephants.

If you want to explore an unspoiled and peaceful corner of Africa by bicycle or on foot this is an ideal spot. But please remember that the Enclave is not a good place to be walking or cycling after dark. Make sure you are back at your accommodation before sunset.

There are guesthouses, campsites and cottages scattered along the way, and several safari lodges, but the Chobe Enclave is a very unhurried place largely undiscovered by tourists. Somewhere to stay for a few days, chat to the local villagers, and take some exercise.



Other things to do are:

- **Mokoro trips** with an unpretentious tourist operation owned and operated by Enclave villagers. They also organize other activities including **storytelling evenings** and traditional food processing demonstrations. They can provide local transport too – handy if you want to do a one way **hike or cycle ride**.
- Taking a look at the Molapo cropping on the floodplain.
- Visiting the **Arts Centre** in Mabele Village and see a demonstration of traditional basket weaving. The Centre will also provide a tour of the village and a traditional meal if given a day's notice, and from time to time organizes cultural nights with **poetry readings, music and dancing**. These are not really aimed at tourists but all are welcome.
- Poke around the **deserted site of Old Kachikau** and learn about the history. This site is a National Monument, but has yet to be developed with any interpretive material. We suggest enquiring at the kgotla in modern Kachikau to see if a guide is available. Strictly for those passionately interested in history!
- Learn about the troubled history of Chief Letsholathebe II and his place in **British constitutional history**. This case is still being cited widely today in very different contexts, including the detention of inmates at Guantanamo Bay.

And a tip from us: don't drive past Zetalye Bakery in Mabele village without trying the scones. They are the best for miles around !