

# WELCOME TO KASANE



Kasane is a tourist town. It was here long before the tourists: in fact the site was occupied at least as early as the 7th Century A.D. (See the box below). But the modern town has really developed since the 1980's, and entirely on the back of the tourist trade.

Back in 1971, there was one general store, the Chobe Trading Store run by the Du Plessis family. The hospital was a two roomed clinic staffed by an orderly. There were no buildings at the Kazungula border. The Kasane Police Station served as the border post. There was a post office, and a manual telephone exchange which was only staffed on weekdays and only from 8 until 4.30. And there was no tarred road from Francistown, just a 4x4 track that came via Bushman Pits. The journey to Francistown took 3 days.

So some things have really changed. You have arrived in one of the premium tourist destinations in the world. Other things haven't changed at all. There are still warthogs, baboons, banded mongoose and occasionally elephants wandering in the main street. The warthogs in particular have adapted completely to urban life and are permanent residents rather than passing visitors.

Everything in Kasane is now geared to serve tourists. The absolute 'must do' activities are a day trip to the Victoria Falls; a game drive in the Chobe National Park, preferably early in the morning; and a sunset cruise on the Chobe River to see the animals going to bed. Even if you are travelling on a budget this is a time to splash out.

We hope you will do all of these things and more, and you don't need our help with the main attractions. Every accommodation provider and every travel agency on the main street can book you into these activities and more once you arrive.

Our job is to tell you a little about the other side of Kasane and the things you can do and see if you have a little local knowledge and a little time to spare **after** you tire of the big tourist attractions.



The first Kasane was an extensive early Iron Age settlement alongside the Chobe River. The site was discovered by accident as a bulldozer was beginning to prepare the land for development of an upmarket residential development. The machine cut through a layer rich in beautifully decorated potsherds and other remains including human burials.

The site was subsequently purchased from the private owner by the government, and the planned development never went ahead. The site, called Nyungwe, was gazetted as a National Monument in 2006. The location is at -17.791693 25.203088. It is about 1 km E of the Kasane Hot Springs and hidden behind a cropped field equipped with centre pivot irrigation. You can walk in to it from Upper Road, but there is little to see on the ground. The excavations are described in detail in a recent paper by Catrien van Waarden, and the illustrations below are reproduced from this.

The original inhabitants of Nyungwe kept sheep, cattle and goats, and also ate wild game. They smelted their own iron from local ferricrete, and we know that they grew beans and milled grain. These people were certainly arable farmers: they chose to build their settlement amidst some of the best soils in Botswana. And they were skilled potters, making cream, red and black pots with characteristic incised decorations.

The pottery decorations suggest that these people were part of the Shongwe Group, a part of the early Iron Age 'Eastern Bantu' migration that had followed the lakes and rivers south from Uganda to the Zambezi Valley.





So what are the 'off the beaten track' attractions for those with a two wheel drive vehicle ?

- With a two wheel drive car you can drive yourself through the Chobe National Park on the Kasane to Ngoma transit route, and **explore the Chobe Enclave**. (Once you leave the National Park, turn left at Ngoma. The right hand fork leads to the Ngoma border post). The tarred road follows the edge of the floodplain as far as Kachikau. You will pass through unspoiled villages; see molapo farming in action; see fishermen deploying their nets in the Chobe River and selling their catch on the roadside; and find people making baskets in the village of Mabele. The many gravel roads and tracks leading out onto the floodplain are largely deserted (except for animals) and would be a wonderful spot for an adventurous cyclist. The whole area is rich in wildlife and you never know just what you will spot – you will probably find yourself cycling amongst zebra, impala and wildebeest, mixed up with the cattle.



- **Visit** a recirculating aquaculture facility growing the local three-spot tilapia – *Oreochromis andersonii*. This farm takes guided tours, and is an inspiring example of innovation and perseverance.
- Have a drink at a bar looking out at **Sedudu Island**. This was the scene of a tense standoff between Namibia and Botswana in the 1990's. The border dispute made it all the way to the International Court of Justice. We have provided you with a guide note to read on the spot.



- Find a viewpoint over the Kazungula Bridge and see this ambitious and troubled project for yourself. Again, we have a guide note for you to read on the spot.



- Pretend you are a local and enjoy a picnic at **Seboba Recreational Park**. There aren't many places in Kasane where you can picnic and stroll down by the river without risking a crocodile encounter. This is a popular spot for locals to take their children. There are organised picnics with live music here from time to time.
- Get up close and personal with some of the smaller animals (like bushbabies) that you won't see on a game drive at a local wildlife park
- Drive to visit the **Lesoma Monument**. This is a military history site. The Rhodesian Bush War spilled over into Botswana at this point, where forces of the Ian Smith Rhodesian regime ambushed a Botswana Defence Force convoy in 1978, setting off a major international incident.





- Spend some time having a drink or a meal at a very special bar. This bar overlooks both the Zimbabwean border and a small waterhole: there is an underground tunnel beneath the bar that leads to an **underground viewing bunker** right beside the water for a close up view of anything that comes to drink. You can see the viewing slots of the bunker in the photo below.



- Stroll around town and spot the urban wildlife. There are **warthogs, baboons, vervet monkeys, banded mongoose** and more right in the shopping centre. They are completely accustomed to life in the village and you can get close-up photos without a telephoto lens.
- **Cycle or walk** the riverside track. Hire bicycles and cycle slowly along the track between the shopping centre and the Chobe River. You never know what you will encounter and the track runs for several km.
- Play a round of **golf** at the local golf course. The water hazards here are very real hazards: they may hold crocodiles; and you may encounter a range of wild animals on the fairways. The course is 9 holes, and clubs and trolleys can be hired on site.
- **Enjoy live music in the evenings** at either Hunter's Bar & Grill; or the Cresta Mowana. Or try the restaurant at Thebe River Safaris, a popular spot with young foreigners and locals alike.
- Visit the Caracal World of Wildlife Charitable trust for injured animals.
- Visit **The Culture Pot**, a small family run restaurant in Kazungula and experience the cuisine of the BaSubiya, Basarwa and Bakgalagadi tribes. Advance bookings are required and **cooking lessons can be arranged.**



- Visit the **Hot Springs**. This is not somewhere you go to bathe, but rather a spot where big game animals come for the mineral rich soil and water. There is also a permanent swamp here which attracts a range of birds. It is a good spot to go for an hour's walk, and elephant sightings are common here in the later afternoon.

