

PREPARED BY
SELFDRIVETOURSBOTSWANA

PALAPYE

THINGS TO DO IN AND AROUND PALAPYE

There is a lot to do in and around Palapye. What's more, many of the best things to do are free. Self Drive Tours Botswana is a company dedicated to helping tourists experience Botswana in depth. And Palapye is our home base, so we know it well. These are some brief notes that describe some of our favourite things to do in this area. All are within a 45 minute drive from the centre of Palapye. We hope you will find it useful.



Lose Quarry



THE LOCATION

Lose Quarry is just off the A1 between Mahalapye and Palapye, and the turnoff is well signposted from the highway. The quarry is accessible in an ordinary car in all weathers.

ONE FOR THE KIDS

Lose Quarry is an old, abandoned quarry which supplied crushed stone for the construction of both the A1 highway and the main trunk railway line. It provides an excellent opportunity to view the rocks of the Limpopo Mobile Belt, so is well known to every local geology student. But there is another reason to stop here

The quarry was excavated down to the local water table. There are pools of artesian water on the floor of the amphitheatre created by the quarrying. No fish here, but lots of side-necked turtles. The water is deliciously cool on a hot day and the pools are mostly shallow, providing safe paddling for toddlers. The walls of the amphitheatre are home to baboons, vervet monkeys, hyrax and rock monitor lizards, so you can do a little wildlife watching whilst you cool off.

It's a great place for a family picnic, and you will probably have it all to yourself.

Toutswemogala Hill



Toutswemogala Hill has been proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage site by the Botswana Government, primarily as an archaeological site. Flat topped hills surrounded by cliffs were highly prized by the earliest Bantu settlers. The hills formed natural kraals, protected against most animal predators and potential rustlers. The ideal hill would have just one path cattle could use to get up and down, and Toutswemogala met the specification perfectly. It was occupied for over a millennium, and the hilltop site has been extensively excavated. The history is described on the National Museum signboard at the road end. Anyone interested can explore the flat top of the hill for themselves.

The hill itself provides a commanding view over the largely empty landscape, and at the SW end there is a rocky arch. It's a bit of a scramble to reach this viewpoint, so a good challenge for children who are tired of sitting in a car. The rock the arch is made from is interesting too. It's a conglomerate of poorly sorted and very colourful pebbles. Rocks like this were once thought to be evidence that Southern Africa was covered by an ice sheet during the Late Palaeozoic Ice Age. But the pebbles actually show no sign of glacial processes.

At the NE end of the hill the rock is different. A fine siltstone with many leaf fossils. You don't need to look hard to find these – the siltstone is splitting as it weathers and fossil bearing fragments are lying about on the surface.

Getting there

There are no guides here, and no guidebook. It's not even signposted from the A1. But the access road is negotiable by an ordinary car in the dry season. A 4x4 would be essential after rain. You'll find the National Museum sign at the base of the hill at 22.2344 S, 27.1929 E.

Borotelatshwene Gorge



THE LOCATION

The gorge begins at the picturesque hill village of Malaka. It is signposted from the very end of the tarred road. There are several small shops in Malaka which sell chilled drinks and basic provisions should you need them.

ONE FOR THE HIKERS

Palapye sits at the very western end of the forested Tswapong Hills. They are a massive block of ancient sandstone, rising high above the surrounding floodplain and stretching nearly 70 km towards the Limpopo River. The hills are dissected by deep gorges. Borotelatshwene Gorge is just one of these, and an easy drive from Palapye.

It takes about 3 hours return to walk the length of the gorge, and the big attraction here (aside from the scenery and the opportunity to take some exercise) is the wildlife. This is probably the best place in Botswana to find the Jameson's Red Rock Hare. This a big (5 kg) and agile hare at home on rocky cliff faces, displaying enviable rock climbing skills.

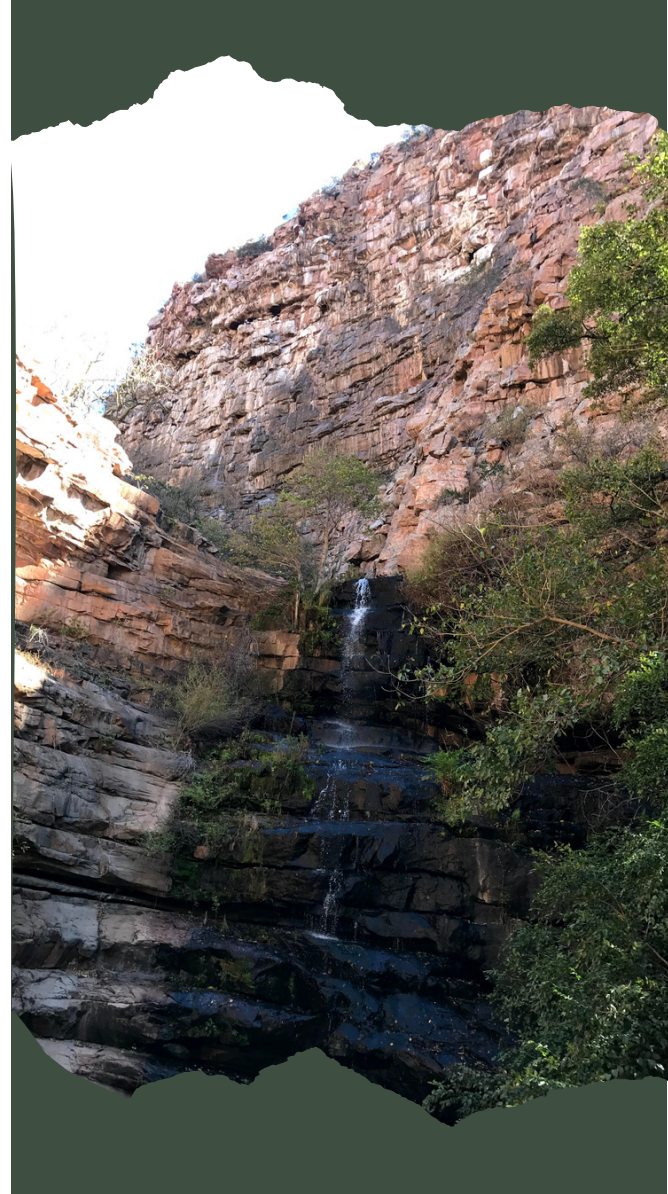
Goo-Moremi Gorge



Several of the gorges in the Tswapong Hills support breeding colonies of Cape vultures. Goo-Moremi gorge is the best known of these. The local village has developed a lovely little resort at the mouth of the gorge, complete with a restaurant and campsite. The gorge itself and the vultures can be visited only with a guide. There is no need to book a guide in advance: you can organise this at the entrance gate to the resort on arrival.

The hike up the gorge is not for those scared of heights. The track in places is a series of gantries bolted into the rocky walls of the gorge. But it is impossible to leave here without seeing vultures, even if you don't stir from the deck of the restaurant

There is another walking track between the restaurant and the entrance gate which you can walk by yourself – it passes through a variety of habitats and is a great way to encounter the other birds of the area.



Porcupine Loop self-guiding trail



FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

There is a self guided nature trail at the western end of the Tswapong Hills, 5 km from Palapye. It starts and ends near Segaigai Farm (see below) and there are connecting tracks to the villages of Malaka and Lecheng. Unfortunately the connecting tracks became rather overgrown during the recent pandemic and are poorly marked. But the Porcupine Loop trail is well maintained. It takes about 2 hours to complete the circuit if you don't stop.

The trail climbs about 100m above the Lotsane floodplain. It passes porcupine warrens and aardvark burrows and points of interest are marked with numbered posts. and there is a viewpoint which provides expansive views to the north and east

The trail is on tribal land and is free to walk. The trail guidebook is available from selected shops in Palapye, and from the Segaigai Farm reception near the start of the trail.

North-South Connector Pipeline Service Road



Palapye is overlooked by its water treatment plant, sited atop a hill just to the east of the town. This plant receives water from the North-South Connector Pipeline, one of the largest engineering works ever undertaken in Botswana. The pipeline draws water from the Letsibogo and Dikgatlong Dams near the villages of Mmadinare and Robelela, and delivers it to Gaborone 368 km to the south

An all-weather gravelled service road was built alongside the pipeline. This road cuts an almost straight line through very sparsely populated countryside north of Palapye, and sees very little traffic. The section from Palapye to the Bonwakathako Dam (see below), is popular with recreational cyclists from the local university. However, very few tackle the whole 130 km from Palapye to Robelela



The grades on the service road are easy and the surface is good. The pipeline snakes past picturesque granite kopjes and provides panoramic views of the Tswapong Hills, the Lotsane Floodplain and the two big dams. And it passes through wild, forested countryside populated by elephants and antelope. A great ride. The downside is that you have to carry everything you might need with you. There are no village shops along the way for the first 100 km. To pedal all the way to Robelela is a serious undertaking.

CNS Gardenex



FOR THE CUISINE

This farm is just to the south of Palapye, on the W side of the A1 highway. It features a lovely outdoor restaurant serving a wide variety of game meats cooked in traditional Tswana style. If you fancy eland, wildebeest, warthog, or kudu for lunch this is the place to go. If you are a vegetarian they need to know you are coming the day before, but otherwise you can drop in straight off the highway.

CNS farm also has a nice outdoor pool – great for any children who might be hot and tired – the adults can watch them in the pool whilst enjoying a drink of ice-cold beer. From time to time there will also be live music. The farm is well signposted and right beside the A1.

Segaigai Farm



Segaigai
Farm

www.segaigaifarm.com

“
**For an evening of
family
entertainment**
—



The Place to Be

This farm is 5 km east of Palapye and at the foot of the Tswapong Hills. It offers bush braai dinners, outdoor movies, foraging expeditions into the hills and more. And it is home to an array of fairly tame nocturnal animals. You can explore the bush tracks after sunset and may encounter a porcupine, a duiker, a springhare or a python. There is also a frog listening station beside the farm dam – see how many species you can identify from their calls.

Find Out More

Check the farm website to see what is on and for directions on how to get there. Note that the road to Segaigai Farm becomes difficult after heavy rain.



@segaigaifarm

The Old Commercial Heart



FOR THE HISTORY LOVERS

The modern town of Palapye began life as 'Palapye Road'. Lord Randolph Churchill passed through as a self drive tourist in 1891 (in a custom designed ox wagon) and reported that there was nothing here except an outspan place for oxen.

Four years later Palapye Road was a bustling railway construction camp, and in 1896 Robert Bailey built the first store. R.A. Bailey's is still trading today.

The commercial heart of the developing village gradually moved westwards, leaving the older buildings behind. This trend has continued to the present day with the newest shopping malls established alongside the A1 highway. Few of the early Palapye Road buildings were ever demolished. There is a magnificent display of photographs in the lounge bar of the Palapye Hotel (which itself dates from 1904) showing many of these buildings in their heyday.

There is another good reason to visit the Palapye Hotel – occasionally, the hotel showcases live Afro-Jazz. You'll need to check their website to see what is on offer.

The Movie Locations



The movie 'A United Kingdom' was released in 2016. Part of the movie was shot in and around Palapye. There is no guidebook and no signage, but fans of the movie will instantly recognise the locations if they stroll around the old railway precinct. Amongst the locations is a replica of the original Palapye railway station, built especially for the filming of the movie.

Bonwakathako Dam



THE LOCATION

You will find the dam at 22.47896 S, 027.22384 E, about 20 minutes drive N of Palapye on the Dikabeya River. The North-South Connector Pipeline Road passes nearby and provides all weather access.

A GOOD PLACE FOR A PICNIC

Many of the dams in Botswana are owned by the Water Utilities Corporation and managed for drinking water. Access to the shore often requires a permit. But Bonwakathako Dam was built by the Bamangwato tribe to provide water for livestock. (Bonwakathako means 'drinking by the hoof') There are no restrictions on access here.

This dam is a favourite spot for Palapye residents to swim, fish, picnic or kayak. Exploring the lee shore can also be rewarding for birdwatchers. Much of the shoreline is forested and there is an extensive reed marsh at the upstream end so the dam provides a variety of bird habitats.

PALAPYE SERVICE LIST

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Palapye Primary Hospital	22.5527 S, 027.1316 E	4920331
Ambulance		997
Midnight Pharmacy and Toro Clinic – after hours care	22.5618 S, 027.0808 E	492 4765
Palapye Police Station	22.5112 S, 027.1103 E	4920145
City Veterinary Clinic	22.5453 S, 027.0890 E	4900095

Places to Worship

St Anthony's Roman Catholic Church has an English language Mass every Sunday morning at 8 a.m. You will find the church in the original commercial area of Palapye at 22.5582 S, 027.1326 E. It is on the same plot as St Anthony's School, and the school is well signposted even though the church is not. Details of weekday.

Mass times and special events can be found on the St Anthony's Mission Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/St-Anthonys-Catholic-Mission-Palapye-107785990937863/>



Bible Life Palapye is a protestant church with an English language service every Sunday at 8 a.m.

Details of any special services that might be held are on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/blmpalapye/>. The church is located in the main street at 22.5487 S, 027.1159 E.



Masjid-ur-Ramah Mosque is at 22.5557 S, 027.1259 E. For prayer times and other events check out their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/people/Masjid-ur-Rahmah-Palapye/100074745334842/>.

A SELECTION OF PLACES TO EAT

Bonitas is a café in an attractive garden setting, which incorporates a nice children's playground. The food has both Iranian and Mozambican influences. You will find it at 22.5510 S, 027.1266 E

Maxi's is a fast food restaurant at the Riverview Mall alongside the A1 highway. It also incorporates a children's playground for small children, and there is a small amusement arcade next door for the older ones, including VR motorbike rides. The Riverview Mall is at 22.5461 S, 027.0854 E. Also at Riverview Mall is our favourite Indian restaurant, **Tadka**.

The Majestic Five hotel has a buffet dinner every night with a wide selection of dishes and an extensive wine list. You can dine in an outdoor poolside setting. A special feature here is the tame peacocks, who will entertain you whilst you eat. You will find the Majestic Five at 22.5772 S, 027.0826 E.

CNS Farm, mentioned above, specialises in game meats cooked in traditional style, and also game biltong.

Segaigai Farm, also mentioned above, provides unique dining experiences suitable for adventuresome palates of all ages. Check out their website, www.segaigaifarm.com to see what is on offer.

TAKEAWAYS THAT DELIVER

Nandos is an Afro-Portuguese chicken fast food chain with two outlets in Palapye. For the menu, operating hours and delivery orders check out <https://www.nandos.co.bw/eat/restaurant/nandos-palapye>

Debonair's Pizza and **Steers** are located in the same complex next to the Puma Station at the junction of the A1 and A14 highways. Both deliver. For the menus, operating hours and delivery orders the websites are <https://location.debonairspizza.africa/palapye> and <https://location.steers.africa/palapye>.

OTHER TAKEAWAYS

Jasonette offers Belgian Waffles from the Mohato Guesthouse behind the Total Filling Station in the main street. You will find the guesthouse at 22.5398 S, 027.0916 E. For the menu and opening hours check their Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/JASONETTEBELGIANWAFFLES/>

Kentucky Fried Chicken operates a drive-through restaurant in the Diphlane Mall at 22.5336 S, 027.0903 E. Check out their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/kfcpalapye/>.

Chicken Licken, **Chicken Twist** and **Hungry Lion** are popular fried chicken restaurants found at the Engen Mall, 22.5427 S, 027.0880 E