



## Kalahari Camping

We all dream of an Africa of rolling grasslands, umbrella-like acacia trees, and teeming with wild animals. The classic savannah landscape beloved of artists like Muhammad Bilal. The picture below is nowhere in particular – he painted from his imagination.

You can find real life scenes like this in the Kalahari Desert.

The jewels in the Kalahari crown are the Khutse and the Central Kalahari Game Reserves. The Khutse Game Reserve is seldom visited by tourists, but is well known and popular amongst Batswana. The Central Kalahari Game Reserve is huge –seventeen times bigger than Yosemite National Park – and the only roads are 4 wheel drive tracks. Tourists come here for the scenery, the wildlife and the solitude. You can drive all day without encountering another vehicle.

The Central Kalahari is a magical place, but you needn't take our word for it. Here's what the Botswana Tourism Organisation has to say....

“Nothing can prepare a visitor for the sheer size and immensity of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), nor its wild, mysterious beauty. There is the immediate impression of unending space, which gives the impression of having the entire reserve to yourself.

Waist-high golden grasses stretch to the horizon, punctuated by dwarfed trees and scrub bushes. Wide and empty pans appear as vast white stretches of pancake-flat earth, meeting a soft, blue-white sky. At night the stars are genuinely awe-inspiring, utterly dominating the land with their brilliance and immediacy.

The CKGR is the largest, most remotely situated reserve in Southern Africa and the second largest wildlife reserve in the world, encompassing 20,386 sq. miles.

During and shortly after good summer rains, the flat grasslands of the reserve's northern reaches teem with wildlife, which gathers at the best grazing areas. These include large herds of springbok and gemsbok and wildebeest, hartebeest, eland and giraffe. Silver Terminalia sand veldt, Kalahari sand acacias, and Kalahari apple leaf dominate the landscape, interspersed with grasslands and dotted with occasional dunes, pans and shallow fossil river valleys.

Initially established in 1961 to serve as a sanctuary for the San people in the heart of the Kalahari (and Botswana), the CKGR provides space for traditional lifeways, without intrusion or influence from the outside world. Following 30 years of closure, the 1980s and 1990s saw limited self-drive and organised tours.”

Africa Geographic have produced a beautifully illustrated article which you'll find at the link below.

[www.africageographic.com/stories/central-kalahari-game-reserve/](http://www.africageographic.com/stories/central-kalahari-game-reserve/)

Self Drive Tours Botswana has organised this self drive package especially for those who feel at home in the wilds and behind the wheel of a large 4x4.



# Kalahari Camping

## Day 1: Gaborone to Jwaneng: 112 miles, 2 ½ hours

One of our staff will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall of Sir Seretse Khama International Airport.

Collect your vehicle, obtain a local SIM card and make sure your card works in the local ATMs. In the villages you will be passing through cash is king.

We have priced in a Toyota Hilux 4x4 camping vehicle with a rooftop tent; a set of recovery gear; a Garmin GPS pre-loaded with 'Tracks4Africa' and a satellite phone. (It would be possible to upgrade to a Toyota Landcruiser 79 if you wish).. Then stock up with food and other essentials for the trip before heading west to Jwaneng along the A10 highway.

There is a lot to see and do along the way, including visiting the ruins of Kolobeng Mission, the home of Dr David Livingstone and his family until destroyed by a Boer raiding party in 1853.

Accommodation tonight will be at a farm campsite.

## Day 2: Jwaneng to Ghanzi 316 miles, 5.5 hrs

It's a good tarred road all the way to Ghanzi. There are fewer points of interest along the Jwaneng to Ghanzi section, and very sparse traffic. The open road speed limit is 120 km/h so you can make good time. Ghanzi itself is a dusty outpost in the middle of nowhere.

It's not so long ago that the Kalahari Arms Hotel in the middle of town removed the fence erected to stop lions wandering into their beer garden. There is an international airport, although the last scheduled flight landed more than 80 years ago. But Ghanzi is not without charm, and it is a very handy jumping off point for the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. Just beyond Ghanzi you come to D'Kar, a Naro Bushman Village famed for its arts centre. The Bushmen have always produced outstanding rock art. The artists of D'Kar have switched to painting their traditional designs on canvas. If you make an early start there will be time to visit their studio, and they are always delighted to welcome visitors. The National Museum has an outpost in D'Kar as well, showcasing Naro material culture.

Tonight's campsite is at a private game farm. This features a unique 'vulture restaurant' which enables you to get up close views of the vultures feeding from an underground bunker.

## Day 3 : Ghanzi to Xade, 106 miles, 4 hrs

It's time to head into the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. But also time to stock up on fuel, provisions, firewood and water, because all will be unobtainable for the next few days. The government campsite at the park entrance has the luxury of running water, showers and flush toilets – the last you will see for a while.

From US\$ 3260 for a couple

10 NIGHTS / 11 DAYS

4x4

CAMPING

### WHATS INCLUDED

- A personal meet and greet on arrival at Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Gaborone
- Hire of a Toyota Hilux GD6 4x4 with a rooftop tent, fully equipped for camping and off-road travel
- Hire of a satellite phone
- Hire of a Garmin GPS unit pre-loaded with Tracks4Africa
- Maps of the CKGR
- Campsites for 10 nights
- A unique Self Drive Tours Botswana guidebook for the route travelled, tailored to your interests







# Kalahari Camping

## Day 4-6: Explore the CKGR

Enjoy the wilderness! Between them the Khutse and Central Kalahari Game Reserves offer several thousand km of 4 wheel drive tracks and 74 campsites. Some of the campsites have pit latrines and bucket showers. For these the park provides the bucket and you provide your own water. Water is scarce here, so don't be surprised to find small animals like mongoose and genet joining you in the shower for a free drink. Other campsites are even more rustic and you need to bring your own bucket.

All the campsites have been sited either for their great views, or for their proximity to waterholes or pans. Most you will have entirely to yourself. At some your closest human neighbours will be 50 to 70 km away. None are fenced, so your animal neighbours will come and go. There has been no hunting in these reserves for many decades, so the animals are unafraid of humans.

## Day 7: Exit the CKGR for Rakops

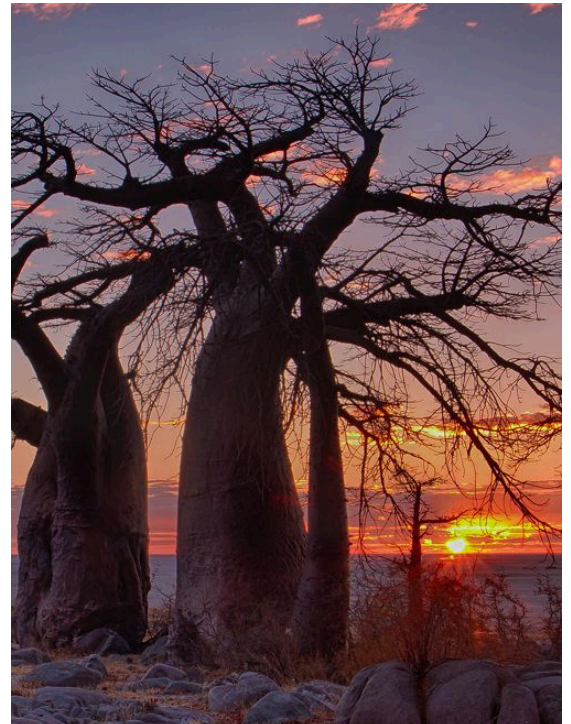
Time to enjoy one last Kalahari sunrise (this one is at Sunday Pan in Deception Valley) and a slow drive to the exit. You need to be heading out of the Matswere Gate by 2 p.m. to leave enough daylight to reach Rakops, the nearest outpost of civilisation. Rakops is another dusty outback village where one half expects tumbleweeds rolling down the street. But the Rakops River Lodge has a nice campsite with hot showers; a swimming pool and a bar; and there is a petrol station not far away.

## Day 8: Rakops to Kubu Island 3 ½ hours

The giant Sua Pan is famed for its wild, mysterious beauty. The immediate impression is of unending space, stretching to the horizon. The southern end of the pan has an ancient shoreline of wave cut islets and bays. Kubu Island is one of the islets. There are few animals here – people come and camp here for the scenery, the sunset and the sunrise. A community trust maintains a basic campsite.

## Day 9: Kubu Island to Lephephe Wells 292 miles 6 ½ hrs

A long way to go so an early start is needed to make the most of the day. You'll be traveling down the 'missionary road' – a route pioneered by David Livingstone in the 1840's. It was the main north/south road through Bechuanaland until the completion of the railway in 1896. The road passes through picturesque hills and occasional historic villages, and it's worth taking all day over the journey. Tonight's campsite is 'Kalahari Vultures' on a working cattle ranch about 30 minutes from the tiny village of Lephephe Wells. Owners Wynand and Marietta just like vultures, and they have created an artificial waterhole with a bird hide so you can watch them come to drink. Of course the other birds of the Kalahari also like water, so this is something of a birdwatcher's paradise. A good place to see leopards too – they are inclined to come and prey on Wynand's calves. He has a box trap, and any leopard trapped is relocated to the Khutse Game Reserve by the Wildlife Department. But they usually return after a couple of weeks. A great spot for your last night of camping, with a genial farmer as your host.



## Day 10: Lephephe Wells to Gaborone 135 miles 3 hrs

Vultures are late risers: they need thermals to get up into the sky. There's not so far to go today, so a leisurely start is in order. The missionary road takes you further south through remote and historic villages with exotic names like Sojwe, Boatname, and Hatsalatladi. The people here are mostly either Kalahari Bushmen or Bakgalagadi, and Setswana is definitely a second or third language hereabouts. All are part of the government's 'remote area dweller programme', aimed at maintaining services in remote districts and preventing rural depopulation. Plenty of places of interest to stop along the way, so make a day of the journey.

Accommodation tonight is the Gabz Airport Inn, the closest accommodation to the airport. A chance to empty out the vehicle and get packed ready for departure in the morning.

## Day 11: Departure

Time to return the vehicle and begin the journey home.