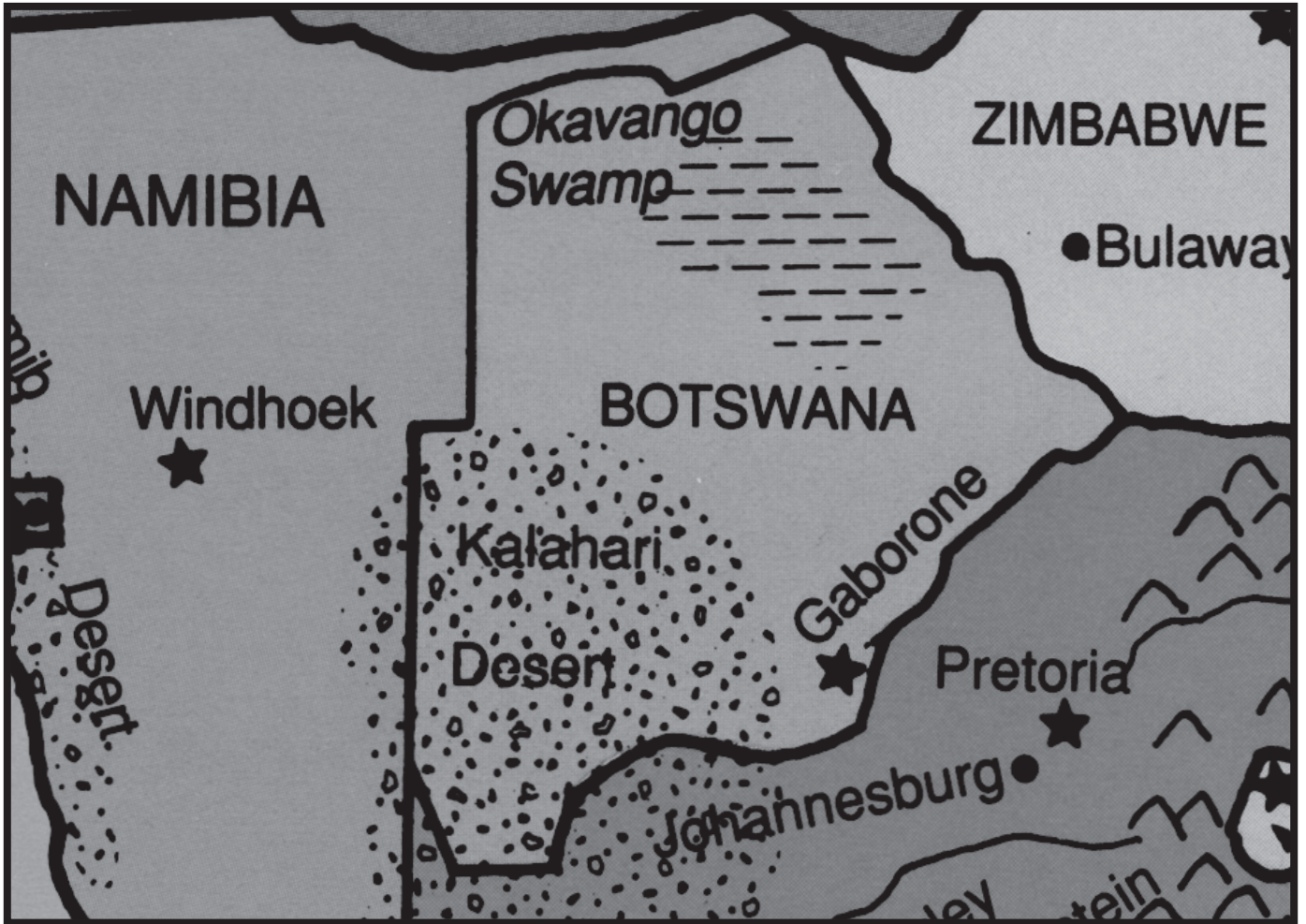


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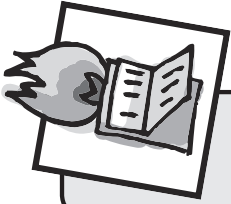
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Botswana



Welcome to Botswana!

Botswana, formerly the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland, is a landlocked country in southern Africa. The country is flat—70% of it being the Kalahari Desert. Since its independence in 1966, Botswana has risen from being one of the most impoverished countries in Africa to one of the most successful. Botswana's economy has developed and grown due to its diamond, tourism, and manufacturing industries.



FAST FACTS

- Official Name:** Republic of Botswana (*Lefatshe la Botswana*)
- Location:** Botswana is located in southern Africa, to the north of the country of South Africa.
- Population:** 2,029,307 (2010 estimate)
- Capital City:** Gaborone (also the largest city)
- Area:** 224,711 square miles
- Major Languages:** English, Setswana
- Major Religions:** Traditional religions and Christianity, as well as Islam, Hindu and Baha'is
- Currency:** The *pula*; 1 pula = 100 thebe
- Climate:** Botswana has a semiarid climate. The winters are warm and the summers hot.
- The Land:** Botswana features mostly flat or gently rolling tableland. The Kalahari Desert is found in the southwest.
- Type of Government:** Parliamentary Republic
- Flag:** The Botswana flag is light blue, with a horizontal black stripe across the middle. On either side of this black stripe is a small white stripe. The light blue color symbolizes rain and the white and black bands represent racial harmony.
- Coat of Arms:** The Botswana coat of arms features a traditional African shield, a zebra rearing on each side. The shield features three cogwheels, representing industry; three waves, symbolizing the country's need for water; and a bull's head that emphasizes the importance of cattle herding. Each of the zebras holds an item: on the left, an ivory tusk (once an important trade industry in Botswana); on the right, an ear of sorghum (a major crop in Botswana).
- Official Animal:** Zebra
- Motto:** "Pula" (Rain)



Natural Environment

Botswana is landlocked, surrounded by South Africa on the south and east, Namibia to the north and west, and Zimbabwe and Zambia to the northeast. Much of the land is low hills and rolling plains. The highest point, Tsodilo Hill (5,922 feet), is located in the northwestern corner of the country. The Okavango River is extremely important to the country, bringing vast amounts of water from the highlands of Angola to Botswana's dry regions. Instead of flowing into the sea, the Okavango River flows into a large depression known as the Okavango Swamp and Ngami Lake in the northern part of the Botswana plateau.

The western and southern two-thirds of the country are part of the large Kalahari Desert. The country experiences light rainfall and droughts, which vary from year to year in their severity. Most precipitation occurs in the summer, which takes place from October through April (since Botswana is located in the southern hemisphere). Summers are hot, with temperatures reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the day. Winters are considerably cooler, with temperatures around or below freezing.

Dry scrub and small trees are located in the savanna regions of the north, and the desert is home to sparse thorn bushes. The vast amounts of sand and dry soil make agriculture virtually impossible. But the country has significant mineral deposits of diamonds, copper, coal and nickel.

Botswana is home to Blue Wildebeests, antelopes, African Wild Dogs, flamingos and other birds, and many mammals. One of the country's national parks, Chobe National Park, has the world's largest population of African elephants. The Chobe and other parks and reserves attract safari-taking tourists.



A HISTORY OF BOTSWANA

Botswana's modern history began around the end of the 18th century, when the Tswana people entered the territory and overtook the local people, called the San. During the 19th century, the country was invaded by several neighboring tribes. Khama III, chief of the Tswana's Bamangwato tribe, appealed to Britain for assistance. The British provided protection from the invaders. In 1885, this alliance established the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland.

In the early 20th century, rule was divided between British authority and an evolving tribal government. In 1934, tribal rule was regularized, though the British continued to consult and advise. In 1964, Britain accepted tribal proposals for a democratic self-government. In 1965, a constitution was enacted, which allowed general elections to take place. Botswana achieved independence on September 30, 1966, under the presidency of election-winner Seretse Khama.

In the years following independence, Botswana maintained no armed forces. Attacks by Rhodesian and South African troops, however, led to the formation of the Botswana Defense Force in 1977. The United States had a large role in the training and development of the organization's leadership. In the absence of military threat, the BDF focuses on disaster preparation, enforcement of poaching restrictions, and foreign peacekeeping. Ian Khama, son of Botswana's first president, resigned his leadership of the BDF in order to assume the presidency in 2008.