Eswatini in 8 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Small in size, Eswatini can be explored in eight days without long days on the road. The trip starts in the bush of Hlane Royal National Park, close to the airport, then moves to the Ezulwini Valley, the cultural and royal heart of the country, before ending in the mountains of Malolotja. Safaris, hikes, crafts and living Swazi traditions follow one another at an easy pace. Here is the detailed itinerary, with driving times and the precautions to take.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Safari in Hlane Royal National Park (night : Hlane Royal National Park)
King Mswati III International Airport lies in the east of the country, at Sikhuphe, close to Hlane Royal National Park: allow about an hour's drive. A former royal hunting ground, Hlane is the country's largest protected area. Settle into the main camp, where white rhinos often come to drink at the waterhole late in the day. The next morning, set off early on a guided game drive: the lion and elephant area can only be visited in park vehicles. The park is also home to giraffes, zebras and a very high density of nesting vultures. In the afternoon, a walk with a ranger offers another way to experience the bush. Follow the rules and never leave the vehicle without permission.

Day 3 · Via Manzini to Mantenga Cultural Village (night : Ezulwini Valley)
Take the road west to Manzini, about an hour from Hlane, and stop at its large market for crafts, woven baskets and fruit. Continue to the Ezulwini Valley, the Valley of Heaven, in under half an hour. In the afternoon, visit Mantenga Cultural Village, a reconstruction of a traditional nineteenth-century Swazi homestead with its beehive huts. The song and dance performances, often held in the late morning and mid-afternoon, are one of the highlights of the trip: check the times locally. A short trail then leads to Mantenga Falls, in the same reserve. Spend the night in the valley, from where everything else is within easy reach.

Day 4 · On foot, by bike or on horseback in Mlilwane (night : Ezulwini Valley)
Mlilwane Wildlife Sanctuary, the country's oldest protected area, lies in the heart of the Ezulwini Valley. With no large predators, it can be explored freely on foot, by mountain bike or on horseback, a rare experience in southern Africa. Zebras, wildebeest, impalas and warthogs graze on the southern grasslands, while hippos and crocodiles share the pool near the rest camp. Keen walkers can climb Nyonyane Mountain, whose summit offers a wide view over the valley; the northern part of the sanctuary is only open on guided trails. Bring a hat and water, and set off early in summer, before the afternoon thunderstorms.

Day 5 · Lobamba, the royal heart, and Mbabane (night : Ezulwini Valley)
Lobamba, the royal and legislative capital, is just a few minutes from the valley. Visit the National Museum, which covers Swazi history and traditions, then the King Sobhuza II Memorial Park, honouring the king who led the country to independence in 1968. Lobamba is also where the great royal ceremonies take place: Umhlanga, the Reed Dance, at the end of the southern winter, around August or September, and Incwala, around December or January. Dates change every year and some parts may not be photographed. In the afternoon, drive up to Mbabane, the administrative capital, then climb Sibebe Rock, a huge granite dome, with a guide.

Days 6-7 · Hiking in Malolotja Nature Reserve (night : Malolotja Nature Reserve)
About forty minutes north-west of Mbabane, Malolotja Nature Reserve protects grassy mountains, forested ravines and waterfalls, including the highest in the country. The trails, from an hour to several days, suit all levels: ask for advice at the reception office and register your route. The cool, often misty landscape is a complete change from the Hlane bush. On the second day, visit Ngwenya Mine at the southern entrance, considered one of the oldest known mines in the world, where haematite was dug tens of thousands of years ago, then a nearby recycled glass workshop. Pack warm clothes: nights are cold at altitude.

Day 8 · Back to the airport and departure (night : Flight home)
Allow two to two and a half hours' drive from Malolotja to the international airport, via Mbabane and Manzini, on the country's main road. Leave early to arrive well before your flight, and do not plan any driving after dark. If your plane leaves in the afternoon, make a last stop at a craft centre in the Ezulwini Valley for the carved candles, baskets and printed fabrics the country is known for. Travellers who arrived by road from South Africa or Mozambique can also leave through one of the border posts: check their opening hours, which are often limited, and the rules for hire cars.

Getting around

A hire car is essential to follow this route at your own pace; traffic drives on the left and the main roads are in good condition. Many travellers rent their vehicle in South Africa: if so, make sure the insurance and paperwork cover the border crossing. Never drive at night, because of animals on the road and the behaviour of some drivers. Violent car thefts are reported on the main roads to South Africa and Mozambique, so drive with doors locked and windows closed. Shared minibuses exist but do not serve the reserves.

When to go

The best time is from May to September, during the dry southern winter: sunny days, thinner vegetation and animals gathered around the waterholes in Hlane. Nights can be cool, or even cold in Malolotja. From October to April, summer brings heat, lush green landscapes and often violent late-afternoon thunderstorms, as well as fog in the mountains. To attend Umhlanga, aim for late August or early September, checking the dates announced each year.

Practical information

Eswatini

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/eswatini/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	in some areas
Currency	Swazi lilangeni (SZL)
Languages	Swati, English
Plugs	type M · dialling code +268 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 999 · ambulance 977 · fire 933

Departure checklist

Documents

☐ Passport valid for at least six months after your return, with blank pages
☐ Visa or e-visa (printed if required)
☐ International vaccination certificate (yellow fever if required)
☐ Travel insurance certificate and assistance number
☐ Paper and digital copies of your passport and bookings
☐ Tickets, bookings and addresses saved offline
☐ International driving permit if you are hiring a vehicle

Health

☐ Travel consultation done and vaccinations up to date
☐ Malaria tablets if your doctor recommends them
☐ First-aid kit: plasters, antiseptic, anti-diarrhoea tablets, rehydration salts
☐ Mosquito repellent suitable for the tropics
☐ Sunscreen, hat and sunglasses
☐ Personal medication and prescriptions

Money and connectivity

☐ Bank told, Visa or Mastercard (and a backup card)
☐ Cash in euros or dollars, recent notes in good condition
☐ eSIM or local SIM card sorted
☐ Plug adapter for the country
☐ Power bank and cables
☐ Offline maps downloaded
☐ Afrique Unie app installed

In the bag

☐ Light clothes that cover up (sun, mosquitoes, places of worship)
☐ A fleece for evenings, dawn safaris and altitude
☐ Walking shoes and sandals
☐ Head torch
☐ Water bottle (ideally with a filter)
☐ Small daypack and waterproof pouches
☐ Luggage padlock

Before you close the door

☐ Your government's travel advice reread
☐ Trip registered with your consular service (if it offers this)
☐ Itinerary and contacts left with someone close
☐ Online check-in done and baggage allowance checked

Notebook made from visiterafriqueunie.com/en/itineraries/eswatini-in-8-days/ · information checked in November 2026 against official sources. Entry, health and safety rules change: check them again before you leave (your country's official advice, the embassy of the country you visit).