AFRIQUE UNIE · TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana in 12 days: a day-by-day itinerary

Twelve days to link two of southern Africa's greatest natural spectacles: Victoria Falls, seen from Zimbabwe and then from Zambia, and northern Botswana, from the elephants of Chobe to the channels of the Okavango Delta. The route runs from east to west, with only one border to cross with your luggage, at Kazungula, and a flight home from Maun. French and British official advice does not warn against any of the areas on this route, but check it again before you leave. Here are the stages in detail, with driving times and border formalities.

Day by day

Days 1-2 · Victoria Falls, facing the falls from Zimbabwe (night : Victoria Falls)

Land at Victoria Falls airport, about twenty kilometres from the small town of the same name, and keep the first afternoon for settling in. The next day, enter the park as it opens: the rainforest path follows the chasm past some fifteen viewpoints, from the Livingstone statue and the Devil's Cataract to the lookout facing the bridge. About 1,700 metres wide and a hundred metres high, the falls are a World Heritage Site, and this is the bank from which you see most of them. Bring a rain cape and protection for your camera when the river is high. At the end of the day, a cruise on the Zambezi, upstream of the falls, is a chance to spot hippos and crocodiles.

Day 3 · The bridge and the Zambian bank (night : Victoria Falls)

A day in Zambia, without changing hotel. The border posts stand at either end of the Victoria Falls Bridge, a steel structure dating from 1905 that you cross on foot in about twenty minutes, passport in hand. On the Zambian side, Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park gives access to further viewpoints, right beside the Eastern Cataract. When the river level allows, usually from September to December, guided trips lead from Livingstone Island to Devil's Pool, a natural pool on the very lip of the falls: book ahead, and give up if the guides judge the current too strong. French official advice reports attacks on tourists between the town of Livingstone and the falls: travel by taxi rather than on foot, and be back before dark.

Day 4 · Into Botswana via Kazungula (night : Kasane)

In the morning, a road transfer of about 70 kilometres takes you to the Kazungula border post between Zimbabwe and Botswana; allow an hour to an hour and a half on the road, plus time for formalities. You have your passport stamped on leaving Zimbabwe, then on entering Botswana, where you may be asked to disinfect the soles of your shoes for veterinary reasons. Most travellers change vehicles at the border: ask your accommodation to arrange the transfer. Kasane, a small town on the Chobe River, is then only about ten kilometres away. Settle in, then set off in mid-afternoon for a first cruise on the river: elephants coming to drink, buffalo, hippos and waterbirds can be seen from very close.

Days 5-6 · Safaris in Chobe National Park (night : Kasane)

Two full days on the riverfront, the most accessible part of Chobe National Park, Botswana's first national park, famous for its large herds of elephants. The classic rhythm alternates a 4x4 game drive at dawn, when lions are still active, with a boat trip in the afternoon, when the animals come down to the water. In the dry season, from May to October, the gatherings along the river are impressive; there are also more vehicles, which is a good reason to set off early. Outings are booked through accommodation in Kasane; if you hire a car, a 4x4 is essential on the sandy tracks. Stay in the vehicle and follow the guides' instructions: wildlife wanders right into town.

Day 7 · The long road south to the pans (night : Gweta)
This is the big linking stage of the trip: about 400 kilometres of tarred road, or five to six hours, from Kasane to Gweta via Nata. The road crosses long stretches of bush with no villages, where elephants and antelope step out without warning: leave early, fill the tank before leaving Kasane and never drive after dark. Beyond Nata, the horizon flattens as you approach the Makgadikgadi pans, among the largest salt flats in the world. Gweta, a village surrounded by baobabs, is the base for exploring them. If the drive seems too long, break it with a night in Nata or take a domestic flight from Kasane to Maun, when one is scheduled, and give up the pans.

Day 8 · Makgadikgadi at dawn, then Maun (night : Maun)
Get up before sunrise for a guided outing onto the pans. In the dry season, the white salt crust stretches to the horizon in complete silence, and you can approach colonies of meerkats that are used to visitors. After the rains, from about December to March, the pans are covered with a thin sheet of water that draws flamingos and migrating zebra, but many tracks become impassable. Do not venture onto the salt alone: it is easy to get bogged down, far from any help. Set off again in late morning: about 200 kilometres, or two and a half to three hours, to Maun, the gateway to the Okavango Delta. Use the evening to pack a light bag for the next two days.

Days 9-10 · Two nights in the Okavango Delta (night : Okavango Delta)
The Okavango Delta, a World Heritage Site since 2014, is a river that vanishes into the sands of the Kalahari instead of reaching the sea. From Maun, you reach the camps of the interior by light aircraft, on a flight that reveals the pattern of channels and islands, or, more simply, the edge of the delta by track and then by boat. Once there, the days revolve around the mokoro, a traditional canoe poled between papyrus and water lilies, and guided walks on the islands, in search of elephants, lechwe and a wealth of birds. Two nights are a minimum to feel the calm of the place. The water is at its highest around June, July and August, months after the rains have fallen in Angola.

Days 11-12 · Back to Maun and the flight home (night : Maun)
One last outing at dawn, then back to Maun in late morning. The afternoon can be spent on a scenic flight over the delta by light aircraft or helicopter, if you did not arrive by air, or simply resting beside the Thamalakane River. Maun remains a small bush town, handy for last purchases of basketwork, a speciality of the region. On day 12, Maun airport, a few minutes from the centre, has flights to Johannesburg and Cape Town, where intercontinental connections leave from. Keep a comfortable margin between the two flights: regional services are few and delays are not unusual. If your ticket leaves from Victoria Falls, ask about flights between Maun and Victoria Falls.

Getting around

You do not have to drive. Around the falls, everything is done on foot, by taxi or by hotel shuttle; the transfer from Victoria Falls to Kasane is easy to book, with a change of vehicle at the border. In Botswana there are two options: a hire car, a 4x4 as soon as you leave the tar, for those used to long distances, or transfers and domestic flights arranged from stage to stage. If you hire a car, pick it up in Kasane and return it in Maun rather than taking it across a border. All three countries drive on the left, and you should never drive at night because of animals on the road.

When to go

The best time is from May to October, during the dry season: this is when animals gather along the Chobe and water fills the Okavango Delta. The falls are at their fullest from March to May, to the point that spray sometimes hides the view; they then dwindle, and the Zambian side can be almost dry in October and November. June to September is the best compromise; to swim in Devil's Pool, aim for September or October

instead. Nights are cold in June and July, and the heat is intense in October. From November to April, the rainy season, some tracks are closed, but the Makgadikgadi pans welcome zebra and flamingos.

Practical information

Zimbabwe

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/zimbabwe/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	US dollar (USD) and ZiG
Languages	English, Shona, Ndebele
Plugs	type D, G · dialling code +263 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 112 ou 911 · ambulance 112 · fire 112 ou 911

Zambia

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/zambia/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	throughout the country
Currency	Zambian kwacha (ZMW)
Languages	English, Bemba, Nyanja
Plugs	type C, D, G · dialling code +260 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 991 · ambulance 992 · fire 993

Botswana

Entry	Depends on your passport: visiterafriqueunie.com/en/visa/botswana/
Yellow fever	Certificate required if arriving from a risk country
Malaria	in some areas
Currency	Botswana pula (BWP)
Languages	English, Setswana
Plugs	type D, G, M · dialling code +267 · UTC+2
Emergencies	police 999 ou 112 · ambulance 997 ou 911 ou 112 · fire 998

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/zimbabwe-zambia-and-botswana-in-12-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).