

The Most Luxurious Train in the World



VICTORIA FALLS ITINERARY & JOURNEY

Pages 2 -17	Itinerary & Journey Victoria Falls
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ITINERARY

PRETORIA TO VICTORIA FALLS

THURSDAY	PRETORIA TO VICTORIA FALLS
10h00	The Pride of Africa departs from Rovos Rail's private station in Capital Park. Guests may freshen up in their suites before joining fellow travellers in the midway Lounge car or Observation carriage at the rear of the train.
13h00	Lunch is served in the dining car/s, which are located near the central part of the train. A gong is sounded before each meal.
19h30	After traversing the Magaliesberg Range dinner is served as the train heads towards Mafikeng for border formalities.
FRIDAY	
07h00 – 10h00	Breakfast is served in the dining car/s.
13h00	Lunch is served as the train heads towards the Zimbabwe border.
17h00	Border formalities take place in Plumtree.
19h30	Dinner is served in the dining car/s.
SATURDAY	
07h00 – 10h00	Breakfast is served in the dining car/s.
13h00	Lunch is served as the train heads towards the Zimbabwe border.
17h00	Occasional sightings of wild animals can occur from the train. Arrive at the Victoria Falls where your Rovos Rail journey ends.

Excursions may be changed according to schedule achieved
Times are approximate and cannot be guaranteed

The Most Luxurious Train in the World



VICTORIA FALLS TO PRETORIA

SUNDAY	VICTORIA FALLS TO PRETORIA
10h00 13h00 19h30	Depart Victoria Falls Station. Guests may freshen up in their suites before joining fellow travellers in the midway Lounge car or Observation carriage at the rear of the train. Lunch is served in the dining car/s. Dinner is served in the dining car/s.
MONDAY	
07h00 – 10h00 13h00 19h30 23h00	Breakfast is served in the dining car/s. Lunch is served in the dining car/s. Dinner is served as the train heads towards Lobatse. Arrive at Mafikeng for border formalities.
TUESDAY	
07h00 – 10h00 13h00 17h00	Breakfast is served in the dining car/s. Lunch is served in the dining car/s. Arrive at journey's end, the gracious Rovos Rail station in Capital Park Pretoria.

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THE VICTORIA FALLS JOURNEY

Early signs of man's first settlement along the banks of the Apies River, in whose two broad and well-sheltered valleys **Pretoria** is situated, go back at least 350 years. Both Sotho and Ndebele people have dwelt here and in 1825 Mzilikazi, the renegade Zulu chief who deserted Shaka with a number of followers established a stronghold on the banks of the Apies. The first European traders and the missionary Robert Moffat visited him there. Other Zulus also came to call and stories of his newfound prosperity soon spread. Shaka learnt of Mzilikazi's whereabouts and sent his armies to obtain retribution for his desertion. Mzilikazi warded off the attack but was forced to flee to the Marico district in the Western Transvaal.

In 1837 the Voortrekkers discovered the fertile valleys of the Apies River and set up a number of farms in the area. One of these early settlers was Andries Pretorius, a hero of the battle of Blood River, who established a farm in the valley at the confluence of the Apies and Crocodile rivers. Shortly after his death the Apies valley was chosen as the site for the capital of the newly created Boer republic, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). Marthinus Pretorius, son of Andries, selected a site on the farm Elandspoort and on 16 November 1855 the new town was named Pretoria in honour of his father.

Pretoria grew up around Church Square, originally the market place and focal point of the Boer community. Several impressive buildings were built around the square such as the Palace of Justice and the old Raadsaal (parliament) of the ZAR. Today Pretoria is the administrative and diplomatic capital of South Africa. The most notable of the city's edifices is the Union Buildings; designed by Sir Herbert Baker and built on Meintjeskop, the hill that dominates the centre of Pretoria. Built on a low hill outside the city is the monolithic Voortrekker Monument. Completed in 1949 to commemorate the Voortrekker's pioneering spirit, it is seen by some as an important memorial to Afrikanerdom and by others as a reminder of apartheid. Its interior frieze is said to be the second longest in the world.

During October and November Pretoria seems to shimmer with a mauve haze of blossoming jacarandas. In 1888 a citizen of Pretoria, J A Celliers imported two Jacaranda Mimosifolia trees from Rio de Janeiro. He planted them in the garden of Myrtle Lodge, his home in the suburb of Sunnyside. They still stand in the garden of what is now Sunnyside School. In 1898 James Clarke obtained a contract to grow trees for the government. He ordered seed from Australia and included in the selection was a packet of seeds of the same species Celliers had imported. Clarke planted the seeds in the State nurseries at Groenkloof where they flourished. Today about 70 000 of these beautiful trees line the streets of the city.

Rovos Rail has its private station situated in **Capital Park** in Pretoria. This was once the bustling hub of steam locomotion in the old Transvaal. Officially opened in 1943, Capital Park, with its locomotive sheds and marshalling yard played a vital roll in the rail network around Pretoria before falling into disuse. Now the home of Rovos Rail, it boasts a small railway museum in addition to its other comprehensive facilities and will, with the addition of semaphore signals and a footbridge, recreate the atmosphere of a fully-fledged railway system. The gracious colonial style railway station serves as the new departure or arrival point for all train journeys except the Garden Route.

Gauteng (pronounced with a guttural G) is the smallest and richest of the nine regions formed in terms of South Africa's Interim Constitution of 27th April 1994. The name is a Sotho tribal verbal corruption of the Afrikaans word 'goud' which means gold. The gold bearing main reef was first struck by an itinerant prospector named George Harrison when he stumbled across an outcrop edging above the surface of the land. His 'Discoverers Claim' can be viewed in a park four kilometres west of the city centre where sandy quartz 'conglomerate' which trapped the fine gold dust around 2700 million years ago is still clearly visible. The gigantic forces of nature were once again responsible for producing the gold metal so precious to the South African economy today. Volcanic rock formed by the embryo earth in its first incarnation was scoured and eroded away over hundreds of millions of years by large bodies of water. Gold was released from the reluctant grip of the igneous rock and washed southwards to be held for an eternity in a series of fossilised beaches.

A great and enormously violent upheaval, perhaps associated with the break-up of the continents, faulted this deeply sedimented beach upwards, allowing it to subside again southwards through an angle of 35 degrees. Eons later, Man arrived to burrow into one of Nature's greatest wonders - an almost inexhaustible supply of gold - a lustrous, highly valued commodity tightly held in vast quantities by the major nations of the world. From their infancy in the early days of 1886, the Witwatersrand gold fields - stretching along a gentle 120km curve from Benoni to Krugersdorp - proved themselves unique. The amount of gold in the ore was and still remains low, but the total reservoir of gold-bearing ore appears to be limitless. These two factors have determined the profile of the gold mining industry in Africa - no single person can manage the industry, unlike the diamond industry which gave rise to great tycoons like Rhodes and Barnato - and only a mining house, consisting of several large shareholders, could raise the imposing capital needed to successfully mine and process the enormous quantities of ore from which small quantities of gold are finally extracted.

The mine dumps of Gauteng, many of which are disappearing as they are reprocessed using advanced technology to capture small quantities of gold which escaped in the less refined methods of past years, are testimony to the scale of mining operations carried out over the years. The deepest mines in the world, 4.7 kilometres below the surface of the earth, are found in South Africa. Mining houses usually control many mines in order to reduce financial risk and to benefit from economies of scale. The milling of the ore is only half the equation. The other half is the extraction of the ore in harsh conditions many kilometres underground, using cheap labour provided by great numbers of able-bodied men from throughout Southern Africa and specially Mozambique. That is one of the ironies of the South African gold mining industry - opening a new mine, with all its high technology infrastructure and deep mining skills, costs billions of rands. And yet relatively unskilled labour using specially developed, costly equipment is used to mine the ore.

Yet despite their size, the mining houses act as the entrepreneurs, identifying new prospects, carrying out exhaustive feasibility studies and keeping the country's economy buoyant as they extract gold from the earth. Names like Anglo American, Anglo Vaal, JCI and Gold Fields dominate the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and perforce, the South African economy. The harsh reality involved in squeezing gold from grudging ore is reflected in the lack of aesthetic presence in Johannesburg. In a city, which is barely over 100 years old, only four buildings predate 1900.

South Africa owes its state of development to gold. The 600 tons of precious metal produced every year by the mining houses has paved the way, directly or indirectly, for the industrialisation and modernisation of a traditional African society. Today, with a new and democratic government in place, South Africa has taken up its rightful role as the powerhouse of the African continent.

Irene is named after Irene Nellmapius, daughter of a Hungarian financier well known before the South African-Anglo War and is the centre of the South African film industry. Adjoining it is the Doornkloof Farm where General Jan Smuts had his home until his death in 1950. The Doornkloof homestead is a surprise to most visitors as it is a modest galvanised iron and wood house simply furnished with its original furnishings and many reminders of Smuts. Two of his motor cars are also on display. The ashes of Smuts and his wife, Isie, are scattered on the nearby Smuts Koppie.

During the rush to the Witwatersrand gold fields a Scot named John Jack, an itinerant trader, decided to try his hand at prospecting. He was passing the farm Elandsfontein when he made his decision and immediately began scraping around in the ground. He found traces of gold almost at his first attempt.

With his partner, August Simmer, Jack bought the farm – which at one time had been exchanged for an ox-wagon – and floated a mining company, Simmer and Jack. Both men made fortunes. The town that grew next to the mine was called **Germiston** by Jack, after the farm near Glasgow where he was born. The original Elandsfontein homestead still stands near the city centre. The colossal dumps of waste rock from the mines have enclosed the city within great man-made mountains.

Germiston became a municipality in 1903 and a city in 1950. The Simmer and Jack mine closed in 1964 by which time it had produced 15 802 469 ounces of gold. Germiston today is a major industrial centre with over 2 000 factories.

The **Magaliesberg** are among the oldest mountains in the world, almost 100 times older than Everest. They stretch for 120kms from Bronkhorstspuit Dam east of Pretoria to Rustenburg in the west and separate the highveld grasslands to the south from the bushveld savannah in the north, with its summit rising 1 852ms above sea level. Sheer quartzite cliffs face south, overlooking a wide valley and a smaller ridge similar in shape and structure to the Magaliesberg. Water runoff from the mountains has created deep gullies and wonderful kloofs, some more than 100ms deep, with perennial waterfalls of crystal clear water spilling from the heart of the mountain. These beautiful places are popular with climbers and hikers.

The Magaliesberg probably has the most intriguing and longest session of the history of mankind than anywhere else on earth. The caves at Sterkfontein, 25km south of the mountains, provided archaeologists with the most significant finds of early humans. Here it was that they discovered "Mrs Ples", 2.3 million years old. Another 4 million year old skeleton, Little Foot, lies deep within the caves, and has still to be excavated.

Many people have lived in the region over hundreds of thousands of years, leaving evidence of different lifestyles, cultures and technologies from primitive societies through to the Late Iron Age and beyond. The tribes of the descendants of the earliest proto-hominids had free reign in this tranquil valley, fished the clear streams and hunted the vast herds of animals that roamed the plains with tools made initially from stone and later forged from iron. While wild animals or early death from injury or disease may have threatened human life but people lived in harmony with nature, which flourished in abundance in the greater Magaliesberg area over the previous two million years of human development.

Modern Twana people talk about how their ancestors migrated here through Zambia and Botswana and settled in groups all over the highveld. A group of Kwena people moved into the Magaliesberg and the Kwena chief at the time, Modimosana, divided his chiefdom among his four sons, who called their groups Kwena Magopa, Kwena Maake, Kwena Matlahaku and Kwena Mmatau. The Kwena Mmatau, who were particularly successful, became the dominant group. By 1800 they had constructed stone walled villages all along the southern slopes straddling the mountain passes that early ivory traders used on their way to the Cape. These traders and other travellers called the mountains Cashan after Kgwashwane, the powerful chief of the Kwena Mmatau, and it remained with that name until about 1840.

Around 1822, Shaka, famous leader of the Zulu nation, sent his favourite captain, Mzilikazi to subdue the Sotho tribes in the area. After conquering the Sotho tribes, Mzilikazi decided to break away from Shaka and the Zulu tribe and create his own clan (khumalo, or elephant clan). Fearing an attack from Shaka, he fled and settled in these regions. Mzilikazi's impis left behind them a trail of destruction while consolidating the Matabele nation, with neighbouring tribes living in trees for fear of their lives.

In the early nineteenth century explorers like Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, and William Cornwallis Harris travelled in this part of Africa and made contact with some of the tribes that occupied the area. Some of these early explorers were scientists, others traders, missionaries or hunters, but no matter what their interests were they all found great rewards in the region.

After a number of Boer trek parties had been slaughtered by Mzilikazi's impis, the Boers, led by Hendrik Potgieter and Gert Maritz, warded off a series of attacks by the Matabeles and drove them north across the Limpopo River where Mzilikazi later established his kingdom of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. The Boers settled in the valleys of the Magaliesberg and turned it into some of the most productive farmland in South Africa.

On the 1st of October 1899, war broke out between the two 'white' tribes, the British and the South African/Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State. Within a year many lives were lost in the fighting in the Magaliesberg valleys, at Kommando Nek, Nooitgedacht and in many of the deep gorges and high ridges along the mountain side. All over the area remnants of these clashes can be seen. Many forts and blockhouses were built at strategic points in the mountains and some can still be seen today, the most prominent being the fort overlooking Kommando Nek and the Hartebeespoort Dam built in early 1901.

The second South African War (a.k.a. the Anglo-Boer war) brought its own pressures to this area. The South Africans, who were very familiar with the mountains, used secret pathways to cross the mountains and launch guerrilla attacks on the British soldiers. Occupation of the Magaliesberg was of great importance to the South African and English forces, especially routes between Pretoria and Rustenburg that crossed the Magaliesberg Mountains through, Silkaatsnek and Kommandonek.

Great battles were fought and lives were lost at Buffelspoort, Nooitgedacht, and Olifantsnek. The mountains were a severe testing of military skills and the Magaliesberg war was dominated by South African leaders like De la Rey, De Wet, Beyers, Smuts and Kemp, who were experts in guerrilla leadership.

Although many of the farms lay in ruins after the war, the natural beauty of the Magaliesberg remained unscarred and breathtaking as it is today.

Citrus fruit, tobacco, vegetables and various sub-tropical fruits are grown on the slopes, and there are nurseries where flowers such as cyclamen are cultivated.

In the past elephants and other wild animals roamed the ridges. Today it is the home of the Cape Vultures. There are about 250 breeding pairs and these great birds can be seen circling in the thermals. Vultures are slow breeders, laying only one egg a year, and the mortality rate for the fledglings is high. Ornithologists climb to the rocky ledges to ring the chicks and ringed vultures have been found as far afield as the Etosha Pan, some 1 200kms away in Namibia.

The Witwatersrand gold reef was formed over hundreds of thousands of years, with its most northern reaches being discovered at Blaaubank, a few kilometres from the present day village of Magaliesburg. This is where the first strike of the Witwatersrand system was made and in 1874 the Blaauwbank area was pegged out for formal gold mining activities. Here the first mining company near what is today Johannesburg was formed, and named the "Nil Desperandum Co-operative Quartz Company". The importance of this mine attracted miners to the present day Johannesburg Reef area and the discovery of rich, valuable veins of gold, creating the largest settlement of man in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Today you can view the early beginnings of gold mining activity at the 'still operational' Blaauwbank Gold Mine and Museum. A few minutes drive from the Magaliesburg village.

Extensive coverage of the history of Magaliesburg can be found in Vincent Carruther's excellent book on the region.

The town **Groot-Marico** (it means Big-Marico) is named after the Groot-Marico River, one of the few perennial rivers in this area. The name has got nothing to do with the size of the town, which is very small. Groot-Marico is well known for its beautiful African bushveld surroundings and the special kind of hospitality of its people.

The fertile valley of the Groot Marico River is densely cultivated with maize, citrus fruit and tobacco. This valley is the setting for many of the tales of Herman Charles Bosman, the South African author who evolved a unique style of Afrikaans-flavoured English in books such as Mafikeng Road.

The town of Groot Marico has an intriguing Wild West atmosphere. Many of the inhabitants are descended from the early Voortrekkers. Marble, slate and andalusite are mined in the area which is also famous for some remarkable dolomite caves containing animal fossils.

When you turn the key of your car in the morning, and it bursts into life, consider that if it were not for an obscure mineral called andalusite, this simple act would not be possible. In the world of minerals, andalusite is known as an alumino-silicate (Al_2SiO_5), and is very similar to the other commercially-exploited minerals of sillimanite and kyanite. One of its uses is in the manufacture of spark-plug ceramics. However, the steel your car is made of most probably, was manufactured in a furnace or ladle lined with andalusite refractory bricks.

While South Africa is the world leader in the export of gold, ferrochrome and manganese, it is also the world's largest exporter of andalusite.

Zeerust originated in 1864 when Casper Coetzee employed a builder, Walter Seymore, to build a church and fort on his farm. Coetzee died before the buildings were completed and the town that grew around them was named Coetzee's Rest, or Zeerust, in his memory. Mixed farming and mining of minerals like lead and chrome are the backbone of the economy in this bushveld town.

The original name of the city, Mahikeng, literally means "the place among rocks". The name refers to the volcanic rocks that provided temporary shelter to Stone Age humans while hunting animals drinking water in the Molopo River. This name was given to the area in 1852 by early BaRolong chiefs who had settled along the river, near the present day village of Rooigrond.

The frontier history of southern Africa was a brawling, boisterous, violent chapter in human history. **Mafikeng's** beginning was during a period of considerable frontier instability. The Rolong people who lived in the area were divided into two factions. Both sides recruited European mercenaries, and some wild individuals, known as freebooters, joined the fray. Rewards from local chiefs for services rendered consisted of farms and the result was the creation of a miniature republic named Goshen, with Rooigrond some 20kms from Mafikeng, as its capital.

There was considerable uproar. The British forces sent a force to occupy the area and the commander, Sir Charles Warren, annexed what became known as British Bechuanaland. An administrative area was established at the place known to the Tswana as Mafikeng (place of boulders). This was the foundation in 1885 of Mafikeng as it was known to Europeans until recent years.

The great glory of the town came with the outbreak of the South African War (a.k.a. Anglo-Boer War). Mafikeng was besieged by South African forces from 14 October 1899 until 17 May 1900.

Colonel R.S.S. Baden-Powell was the British Commander, and it was during the siege that he conceived the idea of the Boy Scouts. The small boys of Mafikeng were almost as tough as their fathers. To keep them usefully employed and out of mischief during the long months of the siege, the ingenious colonel gave them non combative tasks. They proved so useful at carrying out the town's essential services that the idea of the Boy Scouts movement became firmly established.

The siege of Mafikeng captivated the British public. It was not particularly violent. The South African/Boer forces completely outnumbered the defenders of the town but they were content to simply besiege Mafikeng, with an occasional shelling, and no attempt at a massed onslaught was made. There was seldom any fighting on Sundays and apart from monotony, short rations, shell dodging, sniping, periodic patrols, raid and minor clashes, the whole siege was a singularly civilised example of warfare, with polite notes exchanged between the opposing commanders on such matters as the status of non-combatants.

The relief of Mafikeng was a great delight to the British people. London enjoyed a wild night of celebration. So many odd little stories had reached the outside world about the siege – escapes and tragedies of individuals, tales of heroism and cowardice, and of the personalities of the besiegers and the besieged – that the siege will always be remembered and discussed.

In the modern town there are numerous mementoes of the siege. Cannon Koppie with its fort is maintained as a historical monument. Guns and cannons are preserved in several of the original buildings. Mafikeng has reverted to its original Tswana name of Mafikeng and forms parts of the sprawling urban complex that includes Mmabatho and Montsiwa.

Thirty one kilometres away is a vast sink hole in the dolomite. Known as Wondergat ('Wonderhole') it is nearly 100ms deep and 70ms wide at its widest point. It is filled with clear water and legends still linger of its use as a place of execution by Mzilikazi and his Ndebele raiders before they were driven across the Limpopo by the Voortrekkers.

Twice the size of Arizona, **Botswana** is in south-central Africa, bounded by Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The terrain is mostly an arid plateau (910 m high) with hills to the east and the Kalahari Desert in the south and west. In the northwest the Okavango (Cubango) River drains into the vast region of the Okavango Delta and Lake Ngami, thus forming a huge marshland. Rainfall varies from less than 23cm per year in the southwest to about 64 cm in the north. The climate is subtropical, but droughts are common.

The country's population is mainly Tswana, who speak a Bantu language and are divided into eight major groups. There are also small minorities of Kalanga, Basarwa, Kgalagadi, and other peoples. English is the official language, but Tswana is also widely spoken. About half the population is Christian and half adheres to traditional practices.

Cattle farming and the export of beef and other cattle products and subsistence farming are the chief agricultural activities. The country's water shortage and consequent lack of sufficient irrigation facilities have hampered agriculture, and only a small percentage of the land is under cultivation. Corn, sorghum, millet, and beans are the principal subsistence crops, and cotton, peanuts, and sunflowers are the main cash crops.

Mining has become the country's economic mainstay since independence. The only known minerals in the country at the time of independence were manganese and some gold and asbestos, but significant diamond, coal, nickel, and copper deposits have since been found, as well as salt and soda ash. Botswana's diamond mines collectively make up one of the largest diamond reserves in the world, with stones mined by the government and a South African mining concern. The revenue earned from diamonds has underwritten national health-care and educational programs, and now drives Botswana's economy. The vast coal deposits are also being worked. Deposits of antimony, sulphur, plutonium, and platinum have also been found.

Although Botswana's mineral wealth has made it one of the wealthiest nations of Southern Africa, high unemployment remains a problem. Development of the tourist industry has been based partly on the attraction of the country's game reserves, and financial services are an increasingly important sector of the economy. Botswana, because of its landlocked position, remains heavily dependent on South Africa, which provides port facilities. Many Botswana's people work in the South Africa's mines, although their numbers have diminished. There are rail and road links with South Africa and Zimbabwe, its chief trade partners. Botswana is a member of the Southern African Development Community.

The San people (Bushmen) were the aboriginal inhabitants of what is now Botswana, but they constitute only a small portion of the population today. The Tswana supplanted the San, who remained as subjects. Beginning in the 1820s, the region was disrupted by the expansion of the Zulu and their offshoot, the Ndebele. However, Khama II, chief of the Ngwato (the largest Tswana nation), curbed the depredations of the Ndebele and established a fairly unified state.

A new threat arose in the late 19th century with the incursion of Boers (Afrikaners) from neighbouring Transvaal. After gold was discovered in the region in 1867, the Transvaal government sought to annex parts of Botswana. Although the British forbade annexation, the Boers continued to encroach on native lands during the 1870s and 80s. German colonial expansion in Namibia (formerly South West Africa) caused the British to re-examine their policies, and, urged on by Khama 111 they established a protectorate called Bechuanaland in 1884-85. The southern part of the area was incorporated into Cape Colony in 1895. Until 1961, Bechuanaland was administered by a resident commissioner at Mafikeng, in South Africa, who was responsible to the British high commissioner for South Africa.

Britain provided for the eventual transfer of Bechuanaland to the Union of South Africa; in succeeding years, however, South Africa's attempts at annexation were countered by British insistence that Bechuanaland's inhabitants first be consulted. The rise of the National party in South Africa in 1948 and its pursuit of apartheid turned British opinion against the incorporation of Bechuanaland into South Africa. Although Bechuanaland spawned no nationalist movement, Britain granted it internal self-government in 1965 and full independence as Botswana on September 30, 1966. Shortly after, Botswana became a member of the United Nations. Seretse Khama, grandson of Khama III, was elected the first president, and served until his death in 1980, when he was succeeded by Dr. Quett Ketumile Joni Masire.

In the period after independence, the country generally maintained close ties with its white-ruled neighbours and refused to let its territory harbour guerrilla operations against them. Prior to Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, however, Botswana became a refuge for guerrillas. In the years before a multiracial government was established in South Africa, Botswana was the target of South African reprisals.

Although Botswana is rich in diamonds, it has high unemployment and stratified socio-economic classes. In 1999 it suffered its first budget deficit in 16 years because of a slump in the international diamond market. Yet it remains one of the wealthiest as well as most stable countries on the continent.

After 17 years in power, President Ketumile Masire retired in 1997, and Festus Mogae, an Oxford-educated economist, became the new president. Mogae has won high marks from the international financial community for continuing to privatize Botswana's mining and industrial operations.

Although Botswana's economic outlook remains strong, the devastation that AIDS has caused threatens to destroy the country's future. In 2001, Botswana had the highest rate of HIV infection in the world (350 000 of its 1.6 million people). With the help of international donors, however, it launched an ambitious national campaign that provided free antiviral drugs to anyone who needed them, and by March 2004, Botswana's infection rate had dropped significantly. But with 37.5% of the population infected, the country remains on the brink of catastrophe. President Mogae won a second and final four-year term in October 2004.

After serving 10 years as deputy president, Ian Khama, the son of Botswana's first president, Seretse Khama, was inaugurated as president in April 2008. Festus Mogae stepped aside after 10 years in office.

Often described as Africa's fastest growing city, Botswana's capital **Gaborone** is a vibrant and colourful city, which lies in the flat valley between Kgale and Oodi hills, on the Notwane River in the south eastern corner of Botswana, 15km from the South African border post at Tlokweng.

In 1998 Gaborone had an estimated population of 192 000 inhabitants. As the capital city, Gaborone is the seat of government as well as the country's commercial and administrative heart. The city is named after Kgosi (Chief) Gaborone who led the Batlokwa tribe into the area in the 1880s. They settled in Tlokweng, the first urban area you reach when driving into the city from the South African border post 10km to the east. In the early 1890s a colonial fort was built in an area now known as The Village near Tlokweng, and its ruins can still be seen near the Village Cinema.

As plans developed for Bechuanaland's independence, the need to establish an administrative town within the boundaries of the country was recognized. Bechuanaland was the only territory in the world whose administrative centre, Mafikeng, lay outside its boundaries. Nine possible sites had been suggested: Mahalapye, Shashe, Francistown, Serowe, Artesia, Lobatse, Gaborone, Maun and a point within the Tuli Block.

Gaborone was chosen because of its strategic location, its proximity to the railway line and Pretoria, its already established administrative offices, its accessibility to most of the major tribes, its non-association with any particular tribe, and, most importantly, its closeness to a major water source.

As one of the oldest towns in Botswana and site of southern Africa's first gold rush, **Francistown**, home to 92 500 people, is a typical frontier town, strategically placed as the gateway to the north, with all the main roads to Gaborone, Zimbabwe, Maun and Kazungula passing through it. It manages to maintain its character despite being Botswana's second-largest urban centre and "Capital of the North".

Evidence of human habitation goes back for 80 000 years. In the 1820s, the Ndebele stormed through before coming to rest near Bulawayo, bringing their influences and taxation to the Kalanga territory of north-eastern Botswana. The first European to visit Nyangabgwe (the nearest village to present-day Francistown) was missionary Robert Moffat. He was followed by Karl Mauch, who discovered gold along the Tati River in 1867, followed soon thereafter with more deposits in the Francistown area itself. Francistown was the site of southern Africa's first "gold-rush". The area, hailed as the Ophir of Africa, was rushed by prospectors and adventurers alike to stake their claim of fame and fortune, many coming from as far as Australia and America.

With the rapid influx of people, Daniel Francis - after who Francistown was named - organised the establishment of the town. Initially the town consisted of just one main street lined with bustling western-style saloons and supply stores running parallel to the "Cape to Cairo" railway line.

Many of these old shafts and dumps now litter the urban sprawl, most whose history has long been forgotten, along with the dreams of early pioneers. But the excitement of the times is preserved in the evocative names of some of the mines which remain; 'Phoenix', 'Bonanza', 'Jim's Luck', 'Lady Mary' and 'White Elephant' to name but a few. It is not only the mine names which tell a story, the main street in Francistown is still called 'Blue Jacket Street', and is dedicated to the memory of an old prospector, Sam Andersen. Sam was famous before arriving in Botswana as having been the first man to walk, with little more than his prospecting wheelbarrow, right across Australia's Western Desert. Yet he is immortalized in Francistown for the blue denim jacket that he always wore.

The gold in eastern Botswana is a complicated mix of narrow reefs, which made it very difficult for the early miners to extract and by the 1940 much of the small scale operations had ceased, leaving the larger mines, which now merely sustain their operations hoping for new finds and an improvement in the gold price.

Beyond Palapye the main road passes through stands of mopane woodland before reaching the eastern turn-off to the mining town of **Selebi-Phikwe** 88km southwest of Francistown. Many visitors to Botswana in the past have missed this town, located just over 50km off the main road, but it has grown into the third-largest urban centre in Botswana. With the completion of the tarred road from the Martin's Drift border post, Selebi-Phikwe is now a convenient half-way stop-over between Johannesburg (via Ellisras) and Botswana's northern tourist attractions.

Originally there were two tiny places called Selebi and Phikwe, which straddled a large undiscovered deposit of copper and nickel in the area. When the mineral wealth of the area was discovered in the 1960s a mine and township was built in the woodland between the places with the combined name of Selebi-Phikwe.

The mining operations at Selebi-Phikwe have not been as successful as expected and the economy of the area has diversified into areas such as textiles, manufacturing and commerce. A power grid terminal was opened here in 1996 to carry electricity from South Africa through to Zimbabwe - the first stage of the Southern African Power Pool.

Selebi-Phikwe is one of Botswana's four mining towns - the others being Orapa, Jwaneng and most recently Sowa - Selebi-Phikwe was established in 1967 as part of the infrastructure for the BCL (Bamangwato Concessions Ltd) copper nickel mine. This was the country's first modern commercial mine.

With a population of almost 70 000, this centre owes its development primarily to the presence of the copper-nickel mine, which employs over 4 850 people, making it the single largest employer in the country.

Selebi-Phikwe is today an excellent example of a success story in the government's efforts to create employment opportunities as well as to diversify the economy by boosting the manufacturing sector. The town was chosen as a priority centre for regional industrial development and is a principal location for large-scale light manufacturing.

Zimbabwe is named after the mysterious ruins of Great Zimbabwe, located near Masvingo (previously Fort Victoria) in the east of the country. The word Zimbabwe means 'place of stones' and is generic, not particular. These ruins are believed to date from about 800 AD but its origins are lost in mists of antiquity. It seems to have been suddenly deserted in about 1600 AD probably as a result of desertification and absence of firewood. The most probable theory is that this enormous complex of circular battlemented compounds was used as the base for the Mwena Mutapa (Monomotapa). Slaves captured in the interior were kept at Zimbabwe pending the change in the Indian Ocean trade winds or Monsoon, when they were marched smartly down to the port of Sofala (30kms south of modern-day Beira, Mozambique), placed in dhows and blown across to Ceylon, India, Arabia and Persia. They are the largest and most mysterious ruins in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 1953, Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (Malawi) joined together in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland under the British Crown. This was to be the high watermark of colonial achievement. Great investment in infrastructure, mining and manufacturing took place. By 1963 however, Harold Macmillan's 'winds of change' had blown through British Africa. African nationalism in the persons of Banda (Malawi) and Kaunda (Zambia) were determined to force political independence irrespective of the economic costs to their people. It is true to say that these two countries have never recovered the levels of economic prosperity which they enjoyed in the days of the Federation.

The British government refused to grant independence to Southern Rhodesia without majority rule. On 11 November 1965, Ian Smith proclaimed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence for Rhodesia. After a bloody guerrilla war fought by the Patriotic Front headed by Robert Mugabe, now President of Zimbabwe, and Joshua Nkomo, deputy-President, in which 30 000 people (98% Blacks) were killed, Rhodesia metamorphosed into the African-Socialist state of Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980.

Cecil John Rhodes is buried in the granite tomb of the Matobos, just outside Bulawayo. It was Rhodes who gave the instruction that the streets of Bulawayo be wide enough to allow an ox-wagon with its full complement of sixteen oxen to turn a complete circle. Bulawayo thus has the distinction of having the widest streets and the longest railway platforms in the world! The Cape-to-Cairo railway line reached the city in 1898, having come up from Cape via Mafikeng and Francistown and so skirting the Transvaal republic of President Paul Kruger.

Bulawayo (1 360m) was founded in about 1824 by a Zulu chieftain who broke away from Shaka, founder of the Zulu nation in Natal. After spending some years in the area of modern-day Pretoria, Mzilikazi fled before the approaching Boers to found Bulawayo, 'the place of killing' as capital of Matabeleland. A generation later, his son Lobengula granted a mineral concession to CJ Rudd, Cecil John Rhodes' partner in De Beers. On the basis of this document, Rhodes obtained a Royal Charter from Queen Victoria and in 1890, the British South Africa Company began the White invasion / colonisation of 'Charterland' later called Rhodesia and, subsequent to 1924, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

The existence of Hwange rests upon the great coal reserves estimated at 3 000 million tons, which lie beneath the surface. Hwange (746m) sits on a 12m coal seam a mere 46m below the surface. Rhodes gave orders that the railway line be diverted to pass through the coalfields, rather than continue straight to the Victoria Falls.

Hwange the largest of Zimbabwe National Parks covers an area of more than 14 000 square kilometres, the size of Wales in the United Kingdom. It was declared a Game Reserve in 1928 and through a careful management system over the years the small wildlife nucleus has grown into the large herds that now roam the game park.

The National Park is estimated to have more than 40 000 elephants and is also home to a wide range of other species, one of the most rare being the wild dog (or painted hunting dog) that through the efforts of a dedicated team of experts are once again breeding and growing in big numbers. The magnificent Sable Antelope, Zebra, Eland, Kudu and Waterbuck, the bad tempered buffalo, and the tall gracious giraffe are just a few of the animals which are commonly seen on game-viewing drives.

The little station of **Victoria Falls** (913m) was first reached by railway in June 1904. Old colonial buildings, bougainvillea and palm trees against the backdrop of the Victoria Falls Hotel form a charming oasis of soft sweetness after the rugged dryness of the landscape.

The Victoria Falls is one of Nature's great revelations on a par with the Grand Canyon, Mount Everest and an erupting volcano. It is believed that there have existed no less than seven different 'Victoria Falls' over the past two million years. These cascades correspond to the lower gorges of the Zambezi. The present falls is wearing from Devil's Cataract northwards, eroding the softer material behind the present basalt base of the falls. When eventually all the soft matter has been removed, the Victoria Falls will move back, a fresh gorge will yawn and where the falls are now will become a new site for tourists.

Although just over a mile long (1.7km) the falls are broken up by various small islands, including Livingstone's. At their deepest, the falls are 108m deep at Rainbow Falls. Although the usual tour of the Victoria Falls National Park is recommended from the south or Zimbabwe-side of the falls, the finest view along the gorge is to be had from the north side or Zambian-side.

David Livingstone is generally considered to be the first European to have seen the falls in 1855 during his first expedition from the Cape to Luanda (Angola), then back again via the Falls; along the Zambezi to Quelimane in Mozambique. A truly heroic journey! The greatness of Livingstone lies in his painstaking research and accurate observations. His book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa including a sketch of Sixteen Years Residence in the Interior of Africa* was published in 1857 and sold 70 000 copies. It probably did more to influence Western attitudes towards Africa than any book written before or since. Livingstone first approached the falls from upstream and landed on what is today called Livingstone Island. Let him tell the story:

When about half a mile from the falls, I left the canoe by which we had come down thus far, and embarked in a lighter one, with men well acquainted with the rapids, who, by passing down the centre of the stream in the eddies and still places caused by many jutting rocks, brought me to an island situated in the middle of the river, and on the edge of the lip over which the water rolls. In coming hither, there was danger of being swept down by the streams which rushed along on each side of the island; but the river was now low, and we sailed where it is totally impossible to go when the water is high. But though we had reached the island, and were within a few yards of the spot, a view from which would solve the whole problem, I believe that no one could perceive where the vast body of water went; it seemed to lose itself in the earth, the opposite lip of the fissure into which it disappeared, being only 80 feet distant. At least I did not comprehend it until, creeping with awe to the verge, I peered down into a large rent which had been made from bank to bank of the broad Zambezi, and saw that a stream of a thousand yards broad, leaped down a hundred feet, and then became suddenly compressed into a space of fifteen or twenty yards. The entire falls are simply a crack made in a hard basaltic rock . . . In looking down into the fissure on the right of the island, one sees nothing but a dense white cloud, which, at the time we visited the spot, had two bright rainbows on it . . . From this cloud rushed up a great jet of vapour exactly like steam, and it mounted 200 or 300 feet high; there condensing, it changed its hue to that of dark smoke, and came back in a constant shower, which soon wetted us to the skin. This shower falls chiefly on the opposite side of the fissure, and a few yards back from the lip, there stands a straight hedge of evergreen trees, whose leaves are always wet. From their roots a number of little rills run back into the gulf; but as they flow down the steep wall there, the column of vapour, in its ascent, licks them up clean off the rock, and away they mount again. They are constantly running down, but never reach the bottom.'

Updated 31 Oct 2009

THE MAP



DISTANCE CHARTS

0 KMS	Capital Park Pretoria			1625 KMS
15	Centurion	•	15	
50	Kempton Park	•	35	1610
162	Krugersdorp	•	112	1575
183	Magaliesburg	•	21	1463
295	Swartruggens	•	112	1442
377	Zeerust	•	82	1330
427	Mafikeng	•	50	1248
462	Rakhuna Botswana/S A Border	•	35	1198
531	Gaborone	•	69	1163
732	Mahalapye	•	201	1094
878	Serule	•	146	893
966	Francistown	•	88	747
1060	Botswana/Zimbabwe Border	•	94	659
1161	Bulawayo	•	101	565
1256	Sawmills	•	95	464
1379	Kennedy Siding	•	123	369
1421	Dete	•	42	246
1492	Hwange	•	71	204
1505	Thompsons Junction	•	13	133
	Victoria Falls Station	•	120	120
1625 KMS	Victoria Falls			0 KMS