

Botswana

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|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Country name | Botswana ¹ |
| State title | Republic of Botswana |
| Name of citizen | Botswanan ² |
| Official language | English [eng] ³ |
| Script | Roman script |
| Romanization System | <i>Not required</i> |
| ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3) | BW/BWA |
| Capital | Gaborone |
| Area / Population | 581,730km ² / 2.72 million (2024 est.) ⁴ |

Introduction

Botswana is a landlocked country in southern Africa. It shares borders with Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa. Much of Botswana is covered by the Kalahari Desert, which contributes to its arid climate and low population density. The country is also home to the Okavango Delta, one of the world's largest inland deltas and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, renowned for its rich biodiversity and unique ecosystems. Botswana became independent from the UK in 1966. Under British rule it was known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

Geographical names policy

For HMG purposes, geographical names should be taken from official sources, such as the national mapping agency, the *Department of Surveys and Mapping*: <https://www.gov.bw/land-management/maps-and-geospatial-data>. Products are available to buy from this body. PCGN has no recent materials available from this source, however, so other Botswana Government publications may also be used. Any diacritical marks, apostrophes and hyphens included in such products should be retained.

Given that there is limited free digital access to official sources, in their absence, the US Board on Geographic Names (BGN) [Geographic Names Server](https://www.bgn.org/) can be used as a source for names in Botswana. Additionally, the [Africa Geoportal](https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/guinea/) may be used as a helpful source of geospatial data and names⁵.

¹ Meaning 'Land of the Tswana'.

² This form is in usual British use. Locally the terms Motswana (singular) and Batswana (plural) are used.

³ ISO 639 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/guinea/>

⁵ This is a source collated from multiple sources, including Esri, organisations working in Africa and crowdsourced information. It should be used as a supplementary source.

TOPONYMIC FACTFILE

Languages

English is the sole official language in Botswana, but is not widely spoken as a first language (approximately 3%). The national language, spoken by some 77% of the population, is Tswana [*tsn* also seen as Setswana]. Other significant languages are Kalanga [*kck* also seen as Sekalanaga], spoken by 7% of the population and Kgalagadi [*xkv*, also seen as Shekgalagadi], 3%.

Given the predominance of English for official purposes, it is likely that official mapping will be found only in English. If Tswana language variant names are encountered, these could be included alongside the main name on HMG products.

Map of Botswana



Map produced by PCGN for illustrative purposes only, and is not to be taken necessarily as representing the views of the UK government on boundaries or political status.

Administrative structure

Botswana is divided into ten administrative districts, two cities, and five (or four – see footnote 6) towns at the first-order administrative level. The seven urban districts have their category marked in italics in the table below.

| Administrative district | ISO 3166-2 code | Administrative centre | Location of administrative centre |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Central | BW-CE | Serowe | 22°23'00"S 26°43'00"E |
| Chobe | BW-CH | Kasane | 17°49'00"S 25°09'00"E |
| Francistown (<i>city</i>) | BW-FR | Francistown | 21°10'12"S 27°30'28"E |
| Gaborone (<i>city</i>) | BW-GA | Gaborone | 24°39'29"S 25°54'44"E |
| Ghanzi | BW-GH | Ghanzi | 21°34'00"S 21°47'00"E |
| Jwaneng (<i>town</i>) | BW-JW | Jwaneng | 24°36'06"S 24°43'41"E |
| Kgalagadi | BW-KG | Tshabong | 26°03'00"S 22°27'00"E |
| Kgatleng | BW-KL | Mochudi | 24°25'00"S 26°09'00"E |
| Kweneng | BW-KW | Molepolole | 24°24'24"S 25°29'42"E |
| Lobatse (<i>town</i>) | BW-LO | Lobatse | 25°12'51"S 25°40'51"E |
| Orapa (<i>town</i>) ⁶ | - | Orapa | 21°18'30"S 25°22'10"E |
| North East | BW-NE | Masunga | 20°37'28"S 27°26'56"E |
| North West | BW-NW | Maun | 19°59'00"S 23°25'00"E |
| Selibe Phikwe (<i>town</i>) | BW-SP | Selibe Phikwe | 21°58'33"S 27°50'05"E |
| South East | BW-SE | Ramotswa | 24°52'18"S 25°52'12"E |
| Southern | BW-SO | Kanye | 24°58'00"S 25°19'58"E |
| Sowa Town (<i>town</i>) | BW-ST | Sowa Town | 20°33'49"S 26°13'28"E |

Other Significant Locations

| PCGN recommended name | Location | Feature Type |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chobe | 17°47'35"S 25°15'40"E | River |
| Kalahari Desert | 23°00'00"S 20°00'00"E | Desert |
| Limpopo | 25°12'00"S 33°32'00"E | River [<i>Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe</i>] |

⁶ Orapa town is often included in Botswana government sources as a first-order administrative division. It is a protected mining town and is run and administered by its owner and operating company, with the government appearing to have little input there.

| PCGN recommended name | Location | Feature Type |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Makgadikgadi Pans | 20°40'00"S 25°40'00"E | Salt Pans |
| Manyelanong Hill | 24°50'31"S 25°39'58"E | Mountain (Botswana's high point) 1495m |
| Okavango Delta | 19°30'00"S 23°00'00"E | Inland River Delta |
| Okavango River | 18°53'00"S 22°24'00"E | River [<i>Angola, Botswana, Namibia</i>] |
| Shashe | 22°12'00"S 29°21'00"E | River [<i>Botswana, Zimbabwe</i>] |
| Zambezi | 18°50'00"S 36°17'00"E | River [<i>Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe</i>] |

Useful references

- Africa Geoportal: <https://www.africageoportal.com/>
- BBC Country Profile (no longer updated): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13040376>
- Botswana Census 2022:
<https://www.statsbots.org.bw/sites/default/files/publications/Population%20%26%20Housing%20Census%202022-%20Population%20of%20Cities%2C%20Towns%2C%20Villages%20%26%20Associated%20Localities.pdf>
- Botswana Government Local Authorities: <https://www.gov.bw/node/260>
- Botswana Statistics: <https://www.statsbots.org.bw/>
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/botswana/>
- Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com (for information on languages)
- FCDO Geographical Names Index (GNI):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/geographical-names-and-information>
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP) entry for Botswana:
<https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:code:3166:BW>
- Omniglot: www.omniglot.com (for information on languages and scripts)
- PCGN Country Names list: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/country-names>
- Unicode: www.unicode.org
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server:
<https://geonames.nga.mil/geonames/GeographicNamesSearch/>

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