

History

Precolonial history of Southern Africa is a compelling, interwoven web of peoples on the move throughout this vast region – the original travellers on our planet. It's also a story of technology and its impact on our early ancestors. Although Southern Africa's history stretches far back into the mists of time, the only records today are intriguing fossil remains and an extraordinary human diary of Stone Age rock art.

The region has revealed many archaeological records of the world's earliest human inhabitants. It's generally agreed among scientists that the first 'hominids' (upright-walking humanlike creatures) became established in the savannas of East and Southern Africa nearly four million years ago. (Further north in Chad the discovery of a well-preserved skull and other hominid remains dating to between six and seven million years old – the most ancient yet discovered – recently had anthropologists quivering with excitement.)

In Southern Africa, evidence of early hominid fossils dating back 3.5 million years has been discovered at the Sterkfontein Caves in Gauteng, northwest of Johannesburg in South Africa. Sterkfontein is regarded as one of the richest places on the planet for early human remains and is a World Heritage Site. In Malawi, archaeologists have found remains thought to date back as far as 2.5 million years.

It is surmised that about two million years ago several hominid species evolved with *Homo erectus* developing basic tool-making abilities and eventually becoming dominant. Later evolving into *Homo sapiens* (modern humans), these early Africans are believed to have backpacked to other parts of the world, where local factors determined the racial characteristics of each group.

Today, remains of temporary camps and stone tools are found throughout Southern Africa, and one site in Namibia suggests that 750,000 years ago, these early people were hunting elephants and cutting up carcasses with large stone axes. By 150,000 years ago, people were using lighter spear heads, knives, saws and other tools. (Archaeologists classify this period of tool making as the Stone Age, subdivided into the Early, Middle and Late stages, although the term applies to the people's level of technological development, rather than to a specific period.) See Matobo in Zimbabwe p722 and Morija in Lesotho p149, for details of where to see early Stone Age artefacts.

EARLY KHOISAN INHABITANTS

By about 30,000 years ago, humans in Southern Africa had developed an organised hunting and gathering society. Tools were more sophisticated – made from wood and animal products as well as stone – and make-up, natural pigments used for personal adornment, was in fashion. These Boskop people (named after the site in South Africa where their remains were discovered) are believed to be the ancestors of the San people, who still exist in isolated pockets today.

By about 20,000 years ago, the San had made significant technological progress. Tools became smaller and better designed, which increased hunting efficiency and allowed time for further innovation, artistic pursuits and admiring the fiery African sunsets. This stage is called the Microlithic Revolution because it was characterised by the working of small stones. The remains of microliths are often found alongside clear evidence of food gathering, shellfish remains and working of wood, bone and ostrich eggshell.

See www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/humans/humankind for an overview of human evolution in Southern Africa

To learn more about the San, including their history and current issues for survival, see www.kalaharipeoples.org, a nonprofit organisation dedicated to the people of the Kalahari.

ANCIENT ROCK ART

Ogling some of the magnificent rock art sprinkled around Southern Africa, a remarkable human diary left by an ancient people, is a major highlight for many visitors. There's a lot of speculation about the origins of the ancient rock paintings and engravings. Due to the tools and animal remains left around major sites, and the scenes depicted, it's believed the artists were the early San people.

A tantalising sliver of mankind's Stone Age existence, these sites provide a snapshot of the way the San lived and hunted, and their spirituality. The most poignant thing about rock art is that it remains in the spot where it was created. Unlike in a museum, you may catch a glimpse of the inspiration that actually went into the paintings. Although rock art is found all over Southern Africa, the best examples are probably in Matobo National Park (p722), Domboshawa and Ngomakurira (p702), all in Zimbabwe; the Tsodilo Hills (p117) in Botswana; Twyfelfontein (p349) in Namibia; and Giant's Castle (p520) in South Africa.

Most rock paintings reflected people's relationship with nature. Some rock paintings are stylised representations of the region's people and animals, but the majority are realistic portrayals of hunters, giraffes, elephants, rhinos, lions, antelopes and so on in rich red, yellow, brown and ochre.

Common themes include the roles of men and women, hunting scenes and natural medicine. The latter includes examples of trance dancing and spiritual healing using the San life force, known as *nxum*, which was invoked to control aspects of the natural world, including climate and disease. All these elements still feature in San tradition.

Although climatic onslaught means the earliest works have long faded, flaked and eroded into oblivion, the dry climate and sheltered granite overhangs have preserved many of the more recent paintings. Three distinct periods have been identified: the earliest paintings seem to reflect a period of gentle nomadism, during which people were occupied primarily with the hunt; later works, which revealed great artistic improvement, suggest peaceful arrivals by outside groups, perhaps Bantu or Khoikhoi; the final stage indicates a decline in the standard of the paintings – or they may be imitations of earlier works by more recently arrived peoples.

Red pigments were ground mainly from iron oxides, which were powdered and mixed with animal fat to form an adhesive paste. The whites came from silica, powdered quartz and white clays, and were by nature less adhesive than the red pigments. For this reason white paintings survive only in sheltered locations, such as well-protected caves. Both pigments were applied to the rock using sticks, the artists' fingers and brushes made from animal hair.

While admiring the rock art of the Southern Africa, please keep in mind the fragility of the paintings (p26).

By about 10,000 years ago, the San began producing pottery. The artistic traditions of these people are also evidenced by the wonderful paintings that can be seen today in rock shelters and caves all over Southern Africa (see the boxed text, above). The better examples capture the elegance and movement of African wildlife with astonishing clarity. More recent paintings even depict white farmers.

Despite these artistic and technical developments, the San had no knowledge of metal working, and thus remain classified as Stone Age people. For visitors interested in San culture, consider visiting sites of spiritual significance, especially the Tsodilo Hills (p117) in Botswana.

During this same period (around 8000 BC), the San came under pressure from another group called the Khoikhoi (or Khoi-Khoi), known in more recent times as Hottentots. The San and Khoikhoi are thought to share a common ancestry: differences were slight, based more on habitat and lifestyle than on significant physiological features. (The Khoikhoi kept cattle, which were a source of food and transport, and were even trained to charge the enemy in warfare.) They also shared a language group, characterised by distinctive 'click' sounds. Today these two peoples are regarded as one,

In 1660 Jan Van Riebeeck planted a bitter-almond hedge separating the Dutch from the Khoikhoi. Parts of the hedge can still be seen today (p426).

termed Khoisan or Khoi-San, and are mostly found in remote parts of Namibia and Botswana.

Sadly, in recent times the San have been controversially and forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands to new government settlements such as New Xade in the central Kalahari in Botswana. For more information see the boxed text, p119.

THE BANTU MIGRATION

While the Khoisan were developing, in West Africa another group with larger body types and darker skin was emerging: the Bantu. By around 3000 to 4000 years ago, they had developed iron-working skills, which enabled them to make tools and weapons.

Their skills led to improved farming methods and the ability to make unwanted guests of themselves on their neighbours' lands. Over 2000 years ago the Bantu moved into the Congo Basin and, over the next thousand years, spread across present-day Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania and migrated south into Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and other parts of Southern Africa. The term 'migration' here refers to a sporadic and very slow spread over many hundreds of years. Typically, a group would move from valley to valley, or from one water source to the next. This process inevitably had a knock-on effect, as weaker tribes were constantly being 'moved on' by invaders from other areas.

At first, the Bantu in Southern Africa apparently lived in relative harmony with the original Khoisan inhabitants, trading goods, language and culture. However, as Bantu numbers increased, some Khoisan were conquered or absorbed by this more advanced group of peoples, while the remainder were pushed further and further into inhospitable lands.

BANTU CULTURE & EARLY KINGDOMS

A feature of Bantu culture was its strong social system, based on extended family or clan loyalties and dependencies, and generally centred on the rule of a chief. Some chiefdoms developed into powerful kingdoms, uniting many disparate tribes and covering large geographical areas.

Cattle played an essential role in the lives of Southern Africa's Bantu population. Apart from providing food, skins and a form of capital, cattle were also most essential when it came to bridewealth. Marriage involved the transfer of a woman to the household of her husband. In turn, the cattle from the husband's family were reassigned to the family of the bride's father. A man who had many daughters would one day end up with many cattle.

One of the earliest Bantu kingdoms was Gokomere, in the uplands of Zimbabwe. The Gokomere people are thought to be the first occupants of the Great Zimbabwe site (p716), near present-day Masvingo.

Between AD 500 and 1000 the Gokomere and subsequent groups developed gold-mining techniques and produced progressively finer-quality ceramics, jewellery, textiles and soapstone carvings.

THE BANTU

The Bantu peoples could more accurately be called 'Bantu-speaking peoples' since the word 'Bantu' actually refers to a language group rather than a specific race. However, it has become a convenient term of reference for the black African peoples of Southern and Eastern Africa, even though the grouping is as ill-defined as 'American' or 'Asian'. The Bantu ethnic group comprises many subgroups or tribes, each with their own language, customs and traditions.

History of Southern Africa by JD Omer-Cooper provides an excellent, highly readable account of the early peoples of Southern Africa, including fascinating cultural detail that differentiates the many Bantu-speaking groups.

EARLY TRADERS

Meanwhile, from the latter half of the 1st millennium, Arabs from the lands around the Red Sea were sailing southwards along the eastern seaboard of Africa. They traded with the local Bantu inhabitants, who by this time had reached the coast, and bought ivory, gold and slaves to take back to Arabia.

Between AD 1000 and 1500 the Arab-influenced Bantu founded several major settlements along the coast, from Mogadishu (in present-day Somalia) to Kilwa in southern Tanzania, including Lamu (Kenya) and Zanzibar (Tanzania). In Kenya and Tanzania particularly, the Bantu people were influenced by the Arabs, and a certain degree of intermarriage occurred, so that gradually a mixed language and culture was created, called Swahili, which remains intact today.

From southern Tanzania the Swahili-Arabs traded along the coast of present-day Mozambique, establishing bases at Quelimane (p273) and Ilha de Moçambique (p278).

From the coast the Swahili-Arabs pushed into the interior, and developed a network of trade routes across much of East and Southern Africa. Ivory and gold continued to be sought after, but the demand for slaves grew considerably, and reached its zenith in the early-19th century when the Swahili-Arabs and dominant local tribes are reckoned to have either killed or sold into slavery 80,000 to 100,000 Africans per year.

LATER BANTU KINGDOMS & PEOPLE

As early as the 11th century, the inhabitants of Great Zimbabwe had come into contact with Arab-Swahili traders from the coast. Great Zimbabwe became the capital of the wealthiest and most powerful society in Southern Africa – its people the ancestors of today's Shona people – and reached the zenith of its powers around the 14th century (see p682), becoming the greatest medieval city in sub-Saharan Africa.

From around the 11th century it appears that more advanced Bantu-speaking Iron Age people migrated to the area, absorbing the earlier immigrants. As they settled they branched out into a number of cultural groups. One of these groups, the Nguni, were distinguished from their neighbours by strict matrimony rules – marriage was forbidden to a partner that could be traced to a common ancestor. The Xhosa were the southernmost of these people: see p466. Covering large areas of present-day South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho were the Sotho-Tswana, who encouraged inter-cousin marriage. The Venda, who have a matriarchal culture and are thought to be related to the Shona people of Zimbabwe, occupied the north of Limpopo province in South Africa (see p575).

Further north, between the 14th and 16th centuries, another Bantu group called the Maravi (of whom the Chewa became the dominant tribe, see p163) arrived in Southern Africa from the Congo Basin and founded a powerful kingdom covering southern Malawi and parts of present-day Mozambique and Zambia. Masks made by a men's secret society called *Nyau* were an integral part of ceremonies for this group. As well as representing cultural ideals with themes such as wisdom, sickness, death and the ancestors, masks also caricatured undesirables such as slave traders, invaders and colonial figures.

At about the same time the Tumbuka and the Phoka groups migrated into the north of Malawi (see p158). The Tumbuka are known for their healing practices, which combine traditional medicine and music.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, another Bantu group called the Herero migrated from the Zambezi Valley into present-day Namibia, where they came into conflict with the San and competed with the Khoikhoi for the best grazing lands. Eventually most indigenous groups submitted to the Herero. Only the Nama people, thought to be descended from early Khoikhoi groups,

held out. One of Africa's most traditional cultures, the Himba people (see the boxed text, p352) in Namibia, are descended from the Herero.

The power of the Bantu kingdoms started to falter in the late 18th and early 19th centuries due to a major dispersal of indigenous tribes called the *difaqane*, and a rapid increase in the number of European settlers.

THE DIFAQANE

The *difaqane* (meaning 'forced migration' in Sotho, or *mfeqane*, 'the crushing', in Zulu) was a period of immense upheaval and suffering for the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. It originated in the early 19th century when the Nguni tribes in modern KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) changed rapidly from loosely organised collections of chiefdoms to the more centralised Zulu Nation. Based on its highly disciplined and powerful warrior army, the process began under Chief Dingiswayo, and reached its peak under the military commander Shaka Zulu.

Shaka was a ruthless conqueror and his reputation preceded him. Not surprisingly, tribes living in his path chose to flee, in turn displacing neighbours and causing disruption and terror across Southern Africa. Tribes displaced from Zululand include the Matabele, who settled in present-day Zimbabwe, while the Ngoni fled to Malawi and Zambia. Notable survivors were the Swazi (see p598) and Basotho (p136), who forged powerful kingdoms that became Swaziland and Lesotho.

EUROPEAN COLONISATION & SETTLEMENT

Although there had been a European presence in Southern Africa for several hundred years, in 1820 the British Cape Colony saw a major influx of settlers. Around 5000 were brought from Britain on the promise of fertile farmland around the Great Fish River, but in reality to form a buffer between the Boers (to the west of the river) and the Xhosa (to the east), who competed for territory.

From this point, European settlement rapidly spread from the Cape Colony to Natal and later to the Transvaal – especially after the discovery of gold and diamonds. In many cases Europeans were able to occupy land abandoned by African people following the *difaqane* (see p402).

From South Africa, over the next 100 to 150 years an ever-increasing number of Europeans settled in areas that became the colonies of Swaziland, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern and Southern Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basotholand (Lesotho), German South West Africa (Namibia) and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique). With this change Southern Africans would never again be permitted to follow entirely traditional ways.

For colonial and modern history of the individual countries, see the relevant country chapters.

Today's Herero women are distinguished by their extravagant neck to ankle Victorian dresses, petticoats and large hats – a by-product of contact with German missionaries.

To read more about Shaka Zulu (and for links to the *difaqane*), see www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/zulu-shaka.htm

A journey through South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, *The Electronic Elephant* by Dan Jacobson combines frequently depressing contemporary encounters with fascinating historical flashbacks.

An Introduction to the History of Central Africa – Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe by AJ Wills provides a comprehensive work on the region and is considered one of the best around.

The Culture

DAILY LIFE

Giving an accurate picture of everyday life in Southern Africa is virtually impossible given the chasm of wealth differentiation between and within the countries of the region. That said, there are some generalisations we can make that represent very real (and in some cases very terrifying) trends afflicting the everyday life of Southern Africa's diverse population. For more country-specific detail, please see this section near the beginning of each country chapter.

In Southern Africa, life varies considerably between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Middle-class and wealthy families live in homes reflecting that wealth, and many leafy, richer neighbourhoods could be just about anywhere in the Western world. Leisure time is often defined by time spent at shopping centres (and in the case of South Africa, heavily guarded shopping centres). Upmarket shopping malls mean alfresco dining, plenty of retail therapy and certainly a place 'to be seen'.

However, for the millions of Southern Africans (the vast majority of the population) who still live in great poverty, life is about survival. Simple huts or enclosures contain large extended families, and obtaining and preparing food is the focus of daily life.

Southern Africa is largely still a male domain, and black African men will not normally give up a seat to a woman, never mind that she is carrying a baby and luggage and minding two toddlers. Local whites, however, generally follow Western conventions.

There are two major plights affecting the households of the majority of Southern Africa's population. Firstly, the food insecurity afflicting the region is a distressing problem that devastates households and seems to have no end in sight. Dependent on the rains, the region is caught up in a merciless cycle of drought that, when combined with other factors (see the boxed text, opposite), leads to regular food shortages. Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe are the worst-affected countries, but people in Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland are also suffering.

The largest problem facing the people of Southern Africa, though, is AIDS. The sub-Saharan region is the worst-affected region in Africa and, while the statistics are simply dreadful, the socioeconomic effects are overwhelming. South Africa has the world's largest HIV-positive population, and national adult HIV prevalence has risen higher than previously thought possible in countries such as Botswana and Swaziland.

Unlike diseases that attack the weak, AIDS predominantly hits the productive members of a household, young adults. It's particularly rife among those who are highly educated, and have relatively high earnings and mobility. This has an enormous impact on household incomes, with the region facing the loss of a large proportion of a generation in the prime of their life. This has also meant a sharp increase in the number of orphans, pressure on grandparents to assume parenting roles of young children and children pulled out of school to care for the sick, grow food or earn money. There's still a lot of stigma attached to AIDS too, and many locals won't admit to the cause of a loved one's death.

AIDS has led to a sharp decrease in life expectancy in Southern Africa. Recent projections have put life expectancy by 2010 at 29 in Botswana, 30 in Swaziland, 33 in Namibia and Zimbabwe and 36 in South Africa and Malawi. Without AIDS it would be around 70 in most of these countries.

With hundreds of thousands dying every year in Southern Africa from AIDS alone, population growth is estimated to be near zero in most countries and even falling into the negative. Swaziland and Mozambique in particular are suffering from an increase in the epidemic. The only good news comes from Zimbabwe (for a change), which recently recorded a decline of HIV-infected people.

All the countries in Southern Africa are conservative in their attitudes towards gay men and lesbians (see p745). In traditional African societies gay sexual relationships are a cultural taboo. In practice, rights for gay citizens contrast strongly between countries. South Africa's progressive constitution, for example, outlaws discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and gay couples have won many rights. On the other hand Namibia and Zimbabwe have strongly condemned homosexuality with President Mugabe describing them as 'worse than pigs and dogs'.

South Africa has one of the highest incidence of rape in the world (p407) and, as many are too afraid to report the crime, the true extent of the problem is probably much worse than official figures. Another tragic issue in the region is sexual abuse in schools; the sexual abuse of girls by teachers

THE FAMINE

In 2005 much of the Southern African region was lurching headlong towards famine. Fortunately, in early 2006, it appeared a real crisis had been temporarily averted through good rains and aid delivery, although food shortages and hunger remain critically serious problems. At one stage it was feared that between 10 and 12 million people faced potential starvation. Heard it all before? Well, that's probably because the region suffers from a seemingly endless cycle of food insecurity – but that doesn't make it any less real or less horrifying. Some countries in this region are in their fourth consecutive year of severe food shortages.

The simple reason is prolonged dry spells, which leads to crop failure. The reasons behind the region's continued problems in feeding itself are more complex and deeply rooted. There are a multitude of causes including inadequate agricultural policies, the ripping away of a generation of workers through the HIV/AIDS epidemic, a lack of employment opportunities, bad governance and environmental degradation.

The situation varies between countries in Southern Africa with Malawi (see the boxed text, p162), Zambia and Zimbabwe possibly facing the worst of the current crisis. For more on how the famine has affected Lesotho, see p138, and for Swaziland, see p602.

If you're looking to make a financial donation to assist in alleviating this continuing crisis or would like information, you can get in touch with the following organisations (most accept donations online):

UN World Food Programme (www.wfp.org) Make a direct donation to help feed people in the region specifying that you want your money to go towards the effort in Southern Africa.

Oxfam (www.oxfam.org.uk) Plenty of up-to-date information about the crisis and their work in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Save the Children (www.savethechildren.org) Working in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia, this organisation has a special emphasis on the protection of children.

Care International (www.care.org) Care is contributing food, tools, fertilisers and training for local farmers in the affected countries in Southern Africa.

Red Cross (www.redcross.org.uk) Provides emergency food aid in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho.

World Vision (www.worldvision.org) As one of the largest long-term development and relief NGOs operating in the region, World Vision provides emergency food distribution and help to recover lost livelihoods.

Christian Charity Tearfund (www.tearfund.org) Local Christian organisations work in conjunction with Tearfund running food-for-work programmes, distributing food aid and supporting agricultural projects.

Masters of Illusion: The World Bank and the Poverty of Nations by Catherine Caufield discusses the influence that the global development lending agency has had on poor countries around the world.

Have a look at www.safaid.org.zw for the latest news on the battle against HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.

is an enormous problem, and as a result, many girls are reluctant to attend school. The perpetrators often cite low wages and poor working conditions as justification for partaking of this perceived 'fringe benefit'. Sadly, national and local governments and individuals have so far done little to express their intolerance for such unacceptable behaviour.

The contribution of foreign aid to the development of Southern Africa and improvement of the daily life of its citizens is difficult to quantify. While aid that increases grassroots development capability and food production is basically seen as positive, an unhealthy culture of aid dependency is seen as a serious issue in the region, and it's particularly bad in Malawi, Zambia and Lesotho.

MULTICULTURALISM

Southern Africa's population is made up of Bantu-speaking people (the majority) who migrated from the north and west of the African continent (p39), later-arriving Europeans (including Dutch, British, Portuguese and Germans), Indians and pockets of the Khoisan, an ancient Stone Age people who survives in small numbers, mainly in Botswana and Namibia (p37). 'Bantu' refers to a convenient language-grouping, not a race, and in reality the Bantu ethnic group comprises many subgroups or tribes, each with their own language, customs and traditions, living all over the region.

Broadly speaking, two societies and cultures (Western and African) run in parallel, and they rarely cross. As you might expect, in a Western situation social customs are similar to those in Europe, although often a touch more formal – but at the same time more friendly – than in other parts of the Western world. For example, Afrikaners will often shake hands and say their name, even if you're only meeting them briefly. While you'll meet locals of European origin and 'Europeanised' black Africans all over the region, the societies and cultures are predominantly African.

Southern Africa is very multicultural and surprisingly peaceful given the extraordinary number of ethnic groups. This concoction of peoples is exemplified in South Africa, which has 11 official languages! While much of the focus has been on black and white relations here, there is also friction and distrust between blacks, coloureds and South Africans of Indian descent. However, in the case of South Africa, the relatively peaceful transition to democracy from the last remaining white minority government in the region in 1994 (p406) was a true miracle of multiculturalism, despite ongoing racial friction.

Integrating European and African populations has been a source of tension for many years in the region, exacerbated by colonial rule, apartheid governments and, in Zimbabwe, a policy of reclaiming white-owned farms in recent years. However, disharmony stretches much further back with the destruction and dispersal of the *difaqane* (p41), which led to tribal affiliations being disrupted among various Bantu groups in the region. This was exacerbated in South Africa by the Great Trek and the Voortrekkers, who settled into areas they believed were 'vacant' (see p402).

Migration from the poorer countries to the wealthier countries in the region has also brought about tensions and hostility. South Africa for example has far more job opportunities than other countries in the region, and this has led to a great number of migrant workers (many illegal) drifting there. Many come through and are from Mozambique. Africans who look different or don't speak the local language are often harassed by officialdom and the police. Locals are often suspicious of such people too as they think they are stealing their jobs and are responsible for crime (although there are no statistics to back that up).

'Southern Africa is very multicultural and surprisingly peaceful given the extraordinary number of ethnic groups'

MOVERS & SHAKERS

For every country chapter in this book we've included a boxed text called 'Movers & Shakers', which profiles an influential African from that country, including: Oliver Mtukudzi (Zimbabwe; p701); Nelson Mandela (South Africa; p408); Sir Seretse Khama (Botswana; p83); Samuel Nujoma (Namibia; p310); Jack Mapanje (Malawi; p164); Malangatana Valente Ngwenya (Mozambique; p244); King Mswati III (Swaziland; p600); Fanuel Musi of Malealea (Lesotho; p149); and Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia; p636). If you want an insight into some of the extraordinary people who have influenced life in Southern Africa, keep an eye out for these boxes.

Likewise, there has been a drift (some say avalanche) of Zimbabweans looking for work illegally in Botswana. The reason is simple – Botswana has a booming economy while Zimbabwe has the fastest-shrinking economy in the world outside a war zone.

Back home, a migrant's money makes a big difference to the local economy – Lesotho is a good example, with many travelling to South Africa to work in mines and send money back home to their families. It is widely agreed, however, that this type of migration has also contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

SPORT

Football (soccer) is without doubt the most popular sport across Southern Africa, especially for black Africans. You'll see dusty fields everywhere with ragtag balls used for informal matches – training grounds for the big leagues.

Essentially the national leagues work in a similar way to European football. Unsurprisingly, South Africa has the major league (www.psl.co.za), which runs from August to May. The winners of each league qualify for the African Champions League, in which the champions of countries from all over the continent compete. The best countries compete in the African Cup of Nations, held every two years: the next one is in Ghana in 2008. Although no Southern African countries qualified for the 2006 World Cup, South Africa is hosting it in 2010.

The Cosafa Castle Cup, run by the Council of Southern Africa Football Associations, is the annual regional competition, with participation by 13 countries, including all nine Southern African countries. Zambia and Zimbabwe are the most successful, having both won the Cup twice each.

Although cricket, rugby and golf have traditionally been the domain of the white population, they have grown in stature and popularity, especially in South Africa, with that country's return to the international scene. Zimbabwe also fields an international cricket side, but availability of foreign exchange (through international TV rights) has meant that the national cricket body is corrupt and has almost ruined the sport.

RELIGION Christianity

Most people in Southern Africa follow Christianity or traditional religion, often combining aspects of both. South Africa, Malawi, Botswana and Namibia have very high Christian populations (anywhere between 70% and 80% of the general population), while Mozambique has the lowest (around 35%). All the Western-style Christian churches are represented (Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, Adventists etc), most of which were introduced in colonial times by European missionaries. Their spread across the region reflects their colonial roots – the dominant Christian sect in Namibia is German

For all your Southern African football news, including the regional competition, see www.cosafa.com, or check out www.cafonline.com for the African football confederation, including details on club and country competitions.

Lutheranism, while Malawi is dominated by Protestant churches, founded by British missionaries. Mozambique's Portuguese heritage means Roman Catholicism is favoured among that country's Christians.

The influence of missionaries has been beneficial in education, campaigning against the slave trade and in trying to raise the standard of living in Southern Africa; however, this was tempered by their search for ideological control and disruption to traditional cultures. They were certainly influential in Malawi (see p159) where the country's history and existence was shaped by missionaries such as Dr Livingstone.

Although Christian denominations in Southern Africa are generally conservative, many churches actively participate in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Organisations such as **CUAHA** (Churches against HIV/AIDS; www.cuaha.info) and **CRWRC** (Christians Reformed World Relief Committee; www.crwrc.org/development/aids.html) work with local churches to support families, care for those afflicted by the disease and reduce the stigma associated with AIDS. Roman Catholic bishops in Southern Africa, however, have controversially condemned the use of condoms in the fight against AIDS.

Many indigenous Christian faiths have also been established, ranging from a small congregation meeting in a simple hut to vast organisations with millions of followers, such as the Zion and Apostolic churches in Zimbabwe and South Africa. In South Africa alone the Zion Church claims four million followers (the largest in the country).

Islam

Islam is also followed in some areas, predominantly in the north of Malawi and along its lakeshore, and in the northern provinces of Mozambique, where 35% of the population attest to the Islamic faith, the highest percentage in Southern Africa. There are also Hindus and Jews, particularly in South Africa, but their numbers are small.

Traditional

There are many traditional religions in Southern Africa, but no great temples or written scriptures. For outsiders, beliefs can be complex (and to the Western mind, illogical), as can the rituals and ceremonies that surround them. Most traditional religions are animist – based on the attribution of life or consciousness to natural objects or phenomena – and many accept the existence of a Supreme Being, with whom communication is possible through the intercession of ancestors. Thus, ancestors play a particularly strong role. Their principal function is to protect the tribe or family, and they may on occasion show their pleasure (such as a good harvest) or displeasure (such as a member of the family becoming sick).

WITCHCRAFT

Within many traditional African religions, there is a belief in spells and magic (usually called witchcraft or, in some places, *mutu*). In brief simplistic terms it goes like this: physical or mental illnesses are often ascribed to a spell or curse having been put on the sufferer. Often, a relative or villager is suspected of being the 'witch' who placed the curse, usually for reasons of spite or jealousy. A traditional doctor, also called a diviner or witchdoctor, is then required to hunt out the witch and cure the victim. This is done in different ways in various parts of the region, and may involve the use of herbs, divining implements, prayers, chanting, dance or placing the spell in a bottle and casting it into a remote spot (if you find such a bottle in the bush, don't touch it!).

However, services do not come free of charge, and many witchdoctors demand high payments – up to US\$20, in countries where an average month's

South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, 'When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "Let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.'

earnings may be little more than this. It's a sad fact that the 'witches' who are unearthed are frequently those who cannot defend themselves – the sick, the old or the very poorest members of society. There are even reports of very young children being accused by witchdoctors of harbouring evil spirits.

ARTS

Rock art created by the San people since time immemorial is the one artistic tradition that unifies the region, and can still be seen today in many Southern African countries (see the boxed text, p38).

The countries and indigenous peoples of Southern Africa all have their own artistic traditions, often interwoven with culture and beliefs. See the individual country chapters for country-specific information.

When travelling around the region the more popular handicrafts you're likely to see (and be able to purchase) include the following: San crafts (particularly in Namibia and Botswana) such as jewellery and leatherwork, bows and arrows and ostrich shell beads; mohair products such as tapestries and ponchos, especially in Lesotho and South Africa; wooden carvings, especially in places where tourists are likely to wander – wildlife carvings such as huge giraffes are popular, and you'll even find earthmovers, aeroplanes and helicopters; exquisite palm-woven and African-themed baskets, particularly renowned in Botswana; pottery, often highly decorative and of course very practical; Shona sculpture (Zimbabwean), renowned worldwide, with recurring themes like the metamorphosis of man into beast and Makonde sculpture (Mozambican); glassware and candles (Swazi) in the shape of regional wildlife and in the case of the former often made from recyclable material; and township art, which has developed sober themes in an expressive, colourful and usually light-hearted manner. Ranging from complex wirework toys to prints and paintings, deceptively naive images in township art can embody messages far from simple. It developed through the political trauma in South Africa, and this is often reflected in the violent themes of the work. It has also spread to other countries in the region.

Galleries in the region display works from Southern African artists and include more traditional sculpture and paintings. Painters often interpret the landscape, wildlife and the diverse peoples of the region – Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia in particular have galleries that display work from local artists.

Literature

Southern Africa has a strong tradition of oral literature among the various Bantu groups. Traditions and stories were preserved and transmitted orally from generation to generation. In many parts of the region written language was introduced only by Christian missionaries and assumed more importance in the 20th century. Common forms of literature that have developed include short stories, novels and poetry.

Although writers have focused on themes usually concerning their own country, there are common threads. Nationalism, white minority rule, the struggle for independence and life after colonialism are all themes explored by Southern African writers. In Malawi (p165) oppression and abuse of power were common themes through the Banda years, after independence. Guerrilla poets such as Marcelino dos Santos from Mozambique (p243) make fascinating reading. In many countries the growth of literature has paralleled the struggle for independence and freedom.

Works by authors like Bessie Head from Botswana (p84) address African village life and landscape, and Zimbabwean writers (p689) include precolonial traditions, myths and folk tales in their writings.

Images of Power by D Lewis-Williams & T Dowson is a fascinating study of the art of the San people, utilising modern scientific techniques and rediscovered records of discussions between the San and early European settlers.

If you've developed a taste for wonderful Shona sculpture but had no room in your bag to bring some home, see www.shonaart.co.za to order online.

The Penguin Book of Southern African Stories, edited by Stephen Gray, features stories (some of which are thousands of years old) from around the region. The stories show the similarities and common threads in various literary traditions.

Stephen Gill has written several historical books on Lesotho (p152) and, thanks to him, archives were established and much local history saved.

White South African writers have had much overseas success, with literary giants such as Nadine Gordimer and JM Coetzee both awarded Nobel Prizes for literature. If you want to get a sense of where South Africa has come from and where it's going, delving into its literary roots is a good start (p410). Local literature takes you back into the days of apartheid (from both a black and white perspective) and the realities of building the rainbow nation.

Architecture

The greatest indigenous architectural legacy is in the past – in Zimbabwe the ruins of great stone cities such as Khami (p722) and Great Zimbabwe (p716) are rare examples of medieval African architecture in the region. Mapungubwe (p575) in South Africa also contains excellent examples of ancient historical buildings from a forgotten kingdom.

Architecturally, the colonial legacy in Southern Africa is dominated by European designs, with South Africa containing by far the best examples. Pretoria's stately Union Building has won acclaim, while Art Deco design sprang up in Durban and Cape Town after building booms in the early 20th century. Unique Cape Dutch buildings, especially townhouses, can be seen in Cape Town. Examples of 19th- and 20th-century English architecture (especially Victorian) can be seen in many parts of the region and at times in the most unlikely of places (such as Livingstonia in Malawi, p179, and Shiwa Ng'andu in Zambia, p652), while in Namibia, Germany has left a colonial legacy of late 19th century–designed places, including Art Nouveau design. In Mozambique, Ilha de Moçambique is an architectural treasure trove and includes the oldest European building in the southern hemisphere (p278).

Safari lodges, such as those in Zimbabwe, can be architecturally exceptional – a mix of an English sensibility with African pieces and environment.

Dance

In Southern Africa, dance, along with music, is often closely linked with, and plays an important role in, social function rather than being mere entertainment. Movement is regarded as an important type of communication in traditional African societies, and dance can be associated with contact between spirits and the living, and traditional healers often performed curative dances to rid patients of sickness. Symbolic gestures, mime, props, masks, costumes and body painting can all play a part. If you have the chance to see traditional song and dance while you're in Southern Africa, try not to miss out; places where it's possible to do this are listed throughout the country chapters.

Dance also helps to define culture and in Swaziland, for example, the Umhlanga (reed) dance (see the boxed text, p607) plays a very important role in society, drawing the nation together and reinforcing Swazi culture. Mozambicans are excellent dancers, and Arabic influence is evident in their slow swaying rhythms – check out the Mozambique National Company of Song & Dance (p253).

FOOD & DRINK

Although food is not a real highlight of Southern Africa, things are improving all the time. Certainly an urban setting will usually mean more variety, and the colonial legacy in some countries does mean some intriguing culinary combinations.

The business of eating tends to be all about survival for most of the population, and much of the day's activity is associated with the preparation of

meals. In a region racked by famine (see the boxed text, p43), with many countries not able to consistently produce enough food to feed their own population, food is about functionality, not creativity.

South Africa is the best place to eat and certainly has the most variety, an inheritance of its varied African, European and Asian population. Here you'll find a fusion of influences from the curry and coriander that wafted over the Indian Ocean to Afrikaner favourites such as steaks that resemble half a cow and boerewors, a tasty Afrikaner sausage, and Cape Malay cuisine, an exotic mix of spices and local produce.

Seafood is popular in places that have a coastline (be it lake or ocean), both with locals and travellers. In Swaziland you'll readily find prawns on menus, courtesy of Mozambique, which itself blends a variety of influences (African, Indian and Portuguese) into its delectable seafood offerings. In Malawi eating *chambo* (fried fish) by the lake is a highlight. Around the Cape and Winelands of South Africa look for lightly spiced fish stews, *snoekbraai* (grilled snoek), mussels, oysters and even lobster.

A favourite for many visitors to Southern Africa is the fruit, and depending on the season you'll find bananas, pineapples, pawpaw (papaya), mangoes and avocados in plentiful supply.

Staples & Specialities

In parts of Southern Africa, especially in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, meat features as a staple and anything that can be grilled is, including ostrich, crocodile, warthog and kudu – just a few of the variants you'll find. Meat also features in local celebrations.

Takeaway snack food found on the street may include bits of grilled meat, deep-fried potato or cassava chips, roasted corn cobs, boiled eggs, peanuts (locally called ground nuts), biscuits, cakes, fried dough balls, which approximate doughnuts, and miniature green bananas. Prices are always dirt cheap (unfortunately, often with the emphasis on dirt).

For something more substantial but still inexpensive, the most common meal is the regional staple, boiled maize meal, which is called *mielie pap* in South Africa and Namibia, *sadza* in Zimbabwe, and *nshima* or *nsima* in countries further north. In Botswana, the staple is known as *bogobe*, in which sorghum replaces the maize. When fresh and well cooked, all varieties are both tasty and filling, and are usually eaten with a *relish*, which is either very simple (eg boiled vegetable leaves) or something more substantial, such as a stew of beef, fish, beans or chicken.

The main meal is at noon, so most cheap eateries are closed in the evening. In the morning you can buy coffee or tea (with or without milk – the

'meat features as a staple and anything that can be grilled is, including ostrich, crocodile, warthog and kudu'

TRAVEL YOUR TASTEBUDS

If you're not squeamish about watching wildlife during the day and then sampling it in the evening, meat lovers can try some (non-endangered) local produce: such dishes as warthog stew, buffalo steak or impala sausages go down a treat. They can be hard to find, but wildlife lodges and upmarket restaurants are usually the best bet.

Bunny chow is a South African favourite, also popular in Swaziland. It's basically curry inside a hollowed-out loaf, messy to eat but quite delicious. Finally, that South African delight you'll find all over the region – biltong – dried meat that should be wrestled from the pack with a strong set of teeth and a sturdy jaw; it's especially good as fuel for trekking.

African bush tucker varies across the region among Southern Africa's indigenous groups – for example, the San still eat many desert creatures including caterpillar-like mopane worms, prepared in many different ways, such as deep-fried, or just eaten raw.

The excellent *Traveller's Literary Companion to Africa*, edited by Oona Strathern, includes over 250 prose and poetry extracts from all over Africa, with an introduction to the writing of each country, plus a list of 'literary landmarks' – real features that appear in novels written about the country.

The *Heinemann Book of African Poetry in English*, edited by Adewale Maja-Pearce, includes poetry by writers from several African countries, including Zimbabwe and South Africa.

latter is cheaper) and bread, sometimes with margarine, or maybe a slightly sweetened bread-like cake.

Up a notch and popular with tourists are traditional meals of *mielies* (cobs of maize) and *relish*, or Western dishes, such as beef or chicken served with rice or chips (fries). More elaborate options, such as steaks, pies, fish dishes, pasta and something that resembles curry over rice, are worth trying, especially for a change.

Most cities also have speciality restaurants serving genuine (or at least pretty close to it) Indian, Thai, Chinese, Lebanese, Mexican or ethnic African (such as Ethiopian or West African) cuisine.

Drinks

You can buy tea and coffee in many places, from top-end hotels and restaurants to humble local eating houses.

In bars, hotels and bottle stores you can buy beer and spirits, either imported international brands or locally brewed drinks. South African and Namibian beers (Windhoek is excellent) are available throughout the region, and in many areas they dominate local markets. Wonderful South African wines are widely available, as is a growing range of extremely popular spirit coolers.

Traditional beer of the region is made from maize, brewed in the villages and drunk from communal pots with great ceremony on special occasions, and with less ado in everyday situations. This product, known as *chibuku* (or shake-shake), is commercially brewed in many countries and sold in large blue paper cartons, or by the bucketful. It's definitely an acquired taste, and it does pack a punch.

Where to Eat & Drink

Street food is sold at roadsides, bus stations (and sometimes through windows of moving buses) or markets all over Africa; cleanliness is not a top priority but it's cheap and convenient.

A food stall (also called a tea stall or a *barraca* in Mozambique), which is a basic eatery selling inexpensive African food housed in a shack or hut, is typically found in markets, bus stations, and around industrial areas or any part of town with low rent and a good passing trade. Chowling down at one of these places can be a good way to meet locals. Meals at food stalls are served in a bowl, and while some locals prefer to eat with their hands, spoons are normally available. You may eat standing up, or at a simple table with chairs.

A grade above the food stalls are the takeaways and cheap restaurants in cities, large towns, and areas frequented by tourists. These tend to be slightly larger and cleaner and have better facilities.

FOOD ETIQUETTE

Most travellers will have the opportunity to share an African meal sometime during their stay and will normally be given royal treatment and a seat of honour. Although concessions are sometimes made for foreigners, table manners are probably different from what you're accustomed to. The African staple, maize or sorghum meal, is the centre of nearly every meal. It is normally taken with the right hand from a communal pot, rolled into balls, dipped in some sort of sauce or *relish* – meat, beans or vegetables – and eaten. As in most societies, it is considered impolite to scoff food, or to hoard it or be stingy with it. If you do, your host may feel that he or she hasn't provided enough. Similarly, if you can't finish your food, don't worry; the host will be pleased that you have been satisfied. Often, containers of water or home-brew beer may be passed around from person to person. However, it is not customary to share coffee, tea or bottled soft drinks.

THE SAN HELP OVERWEIGHT WESTERNERS

A new diet fad has been sweeping the Western world, and North America in particular, thanks to the San people (p37) of Southern Africa. The San eat *hoodia*, a prickly, cucumber-like plant, to suppress their appetite on long hunting treks. Some bright spark realised that if it works for some of the last Stone Age people on earth then it should be good for overweight couch potatoes. Plausible? Maybe. *Hoodia*-based products are now in production, although scientific tests on humans have been minimal to date and there are a lot of 'fake *hoodia*' products going around. Still, some recipients swear by them.

Hopefully the money made from the sale of this drug in the lucrative weight-loss market makes its way back to the impoverished San.

Up another level are cheap to midrange restaurants (called a *salā de cha* in Mozambique), with tablecloths, menus and waiters, where meals cost from US\$3 to US\$5. Moving up the scale to the midrange, you'll typically pay US\$5 to US\$10 per person for the standard beef, chicken, fish, lamb and other dishes, but the price is justified by better quality, presentation, location and cleanliness.

At top-end hotels and restaurants in cities and tourist areas, you'll find straightforward international standards, including plenty of steak places as well as French, British and Italian options.

South Africa, Namibia and Botswana are also going through something of a fast-food revolution – particularly popular are places specialising in fried or *peri peri* (hot chilli) chicken. Ubiquitous chains are becoming common, and in new shopping malls you'll even find fast-food Thai, seafood and Middle Eastern outlets.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Vegetarianism isn't widely understood in Africa, and many locals think a meal is incomplete unless at least half of it once lived and breathed. That said, if you're not worried about variety or taste, finding inexpensive vegetarian options isn't that difficult. In the cheapest places, you may have to stick to the *mielies* and greens. A step above that would be eggs and chips (which may be fried in animal fat) with whatever vegetables may be available. Those who eat fish should have even more luck, but note that many places will even serve chicken as a vegetarian dish, on the notion that it's not really meat. Nearly all midrange and upmarket restaurants offer some sort of genuine vegetarian dish, even if it's just a vegetable omelette or pasta and sauce. In larger cities and towns, a growing number of places specialise in light vegetarian cuisine – especially at lunchtime – and of course, Lebanese, Indian and Italian restaurants usually offer interesting meat-free choices.

'Traditional beer of the region is made from maize, brewed in the villages and drunk from communal pots'

Music in Southern Africa

Jane Cornwell

Long before there were borders, there was music. Thousands of years ago, right across the handful of countries we now loosely term Southern Africa, a host of cultures were singing, dancing and creating rhythms to accompany their lives. And arguably it is music, more than any other aspect of culture, that has best survived the onslaught of Western influences. Not always untarnished, though: while some traditions persist, others have merged, shape-shifted, formed new genres. South Africa alone has the greatest range of musical styles on the African continent, helped along by its gargantuan recording industry. Some of these styles have spilled over into neighbouring countries, all of which have styles of their own.

Music still marks the important stages of a Southern African person's life. It still enlightens, heals, invokes spirits. It still makes people dance, sing, holler. It does all this whatever the instrument – whose form can change according to ethnicity, geography, gender of the player and, sometimes, whatever objects are lying around. Expressing oneself through music isn't always easy: think long-suffering, government-censored Zimbabwe. Or Namibia, whose music industry lacks distribution networks, major record labels, direction. Or Mozambique, where most artists don't receive royalties, and promoters frequently don't pay. Regardless, music still pulses in Southern Africa like a heartbeat. So remember: just because you can't buy it – or even see or hear it – doesn't mean that it isn't there.

A POTTED HISTORY

It's better, initially, to think ethnicity rather than country. Southern Africa is one of the world's oldest inhabited regions, after all. So old, in fact, that its earliest music can be traced back some 4000 years to the Stone Age, when groups of hunter-gatherer San played basic flutes and rattles and sang in their unique click language. Today's San still sound wonderfully ethereal, their singing, clapping trance dance the stuff of ritual, tourist haunts and left-field record labels. But it's the glorious vocal polyphony of the Bantu-speaking people – the Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho of the present day – that has come to characterise the region; this is the music that attracted Paul Simon before he recorded his seminal 1988 album *Graceland*.

Long before the Christian missionaries and colonialists arrived in the 19th century, there were kingdoms. In Zambia, each king had his own royal musician, just as each kingdom had its own music. Singing often accompanied instrumental music played on horns, percussion, drums and the stringed *babatone* – the inspiration for the contemporary Zambian style, *kalindula*. Elsewhere, herders used flutes and other instruments to help control the movement of cattle. (Oh, and the first major style of South African popular music? None other than pennywhistle jive, later known as *kwela*.) The Bantu of Namibia played gourds, horn trumpets and marimbas, while the various ethnic groups of Malawi travelled widely, spreading musical influences from the Zulu of South Africa and the Islamic Yao people of Tanzania.

Colonial rule altered everything. The folk forms of Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, bear hallmarks of the latter – though its main style, *marrabenta*, flourished after independence. Mozambican bands played a roots

style similar to that heard in Tanzania and Zambia, while musicians in the heart of country played a style like that of Zimbabwe. The music of southern Mozambique was altered by the influx of workers returning from the South African mines (revolutionary lyrics were delivered over regional melodies), just as the workers who migrate from Lesotho to the mines and cities of neighbouring South Africa have developed a rich genre of sung oral poetry – or word music – that focuses on the experiences of migrant life. African folk

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS MAPFUMO

The Lion of Zimbabwe isn't exactly roaring, but he's pretty furious. Over 25 years of misrule by Robert Mugabe's government has seen his country's economy collapse. Crime, unemployment and food prices are soaring; corruption and censorship are rife. Human rights abuses abound. 'These are not good circumstances,' says Thomas Mapfumo, who left Harare for the USA after the April 2000 elections, when his life was threatened. What makes things worse for the Zimbabwean musician is that this is a government he helped to bring about.

The politicisation of TM, as he is known, began in the mid-1970s in what was then Rhodesia. With the traditions and customs of his country subjugated by the ruling white minority, he began his career playing covers of American hits. But as the country lurched towards civil war, Mapfumo adopted a more revolutionary stance. He was banned from the airwaves. Decades later, his latest album, *Rise Up* (Real World Records), has been similarly censored, though it pulses from Harare's short-wave underground outfits. Its songs exhort the poor of Zimbabwe to fight for their rights. To, indeed, rise up.

As a boy from the countryside Mapfumo had learned Shona music from his grandparents, members – like 70% of the population – of an old culture with its own language and traditions. The Shona's signature instrument was the mbira, an instrument with a sound known to invite ancestor spirits to possess the living during religious ceremonies. Mapfumo began to arrange its splattering rhythms for the guitars of his band, Blacks Unlimited. Their Shona-language lyrics sustained guerrilla fighters in the bush.

'We were an oppressed people in our own land,' he says. 'When civil war came I found a focus.' He called the music *chimurenga*, which is Shona for 'struggle'. The white population were unable to understand the Shona language, but there was no ignoring Mapfumo's popularity in the wake of his album, *Hokoyo* (Watch Out). The Ian Smith regime arrested Mapfumo, detaining him without trial for 90 days.

'They thought my music was encouraging youngsters to leave the country to train and come back fighting the government,' says Mapfumo, who cites Malcolm X and Martin Luther King as inspirations. 'I kept telling them it was just the traditional music of the people of Zimbabwe. There was no way I wasn't going to sing it.'

He remained prolific until Zimbabwean independence in 1980, releasing album after socially aware album and influencing other home-grown stars such as Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi. With over 30 years of touring to his credit, his Blacks Unlimited *pungwes* – dance marathons featuring songs decrying AIDS, alcoholism and domestic violence – are the stuff of legend. He was unofficially bestowed with Zimbabwe's national symbol, the lion, as an alias, and exile has only increased his ire.

The year 2003 was the first time since 1962 that Mapfumo did not perform his traditional year-end shows in his homeland. Wisely, it seems: a bootleg release of a concert in England – featuring 'Masoja Nemapurisa', a song that told of police brutality – had youths loyal to Mugabe's Zanu-PF party destroying any copies they found. In 2005 Mapfumo opened the Live8 Africa concert in Cornwall, England. 'Down with dictatorships!' he declared at the outset.

It took Mapfumo a while to admit that Mugabe's government was failing to deliver. 'We supported them when they were fighting in the bush. When they came to power they promised us many things, but the people are still suffering and the country is a mess. So what did we fight for?' He sighs. 'I see myself as a representative,' he adds. 'If anyone points a finger at me, they're pointing it at the people.'

Rage (www.rage.co.za) is an online South African magazine with black urban music news, reviews and fashion.

Namibia's recording industry is virtually non-existent – you'll often see artists selling their own CDs on street corners.

The Drumcafé's Traditional Music of Black South Africa (2005), by Laurie Levine, is an exploration of the traditional music of black South Africa in ceremonies and rituals. The book includes samples of musical scores, a look at some well-known artists and a handy CD.

became popular in Zambia, as troubadours entertained exhausted miners. In South Africa, Dutch farmers brought a European folk music that became what is known today as *boeremusiek*.

It's no wonder, then, that the banjo, violin, concertina and electric guitar have all had a profound influence on Southern African music. Malawian banjo-and-guitar duos were huge in the 1950s and '60s, after which South African *kwela* took over. The influence of guitar-based rumba from Zaire (now the Congo) was felt right across the region (political upheaval saw many Congolese musicians relocate to Southern Africa); its upstart cousin, soukous, has made its presence felt in everything from Zambian *kalindula* to Malawian *kwasa kwasa*. The gospel mega-genre has evolved from the teachings of 19th-century Christian missionaries, which were customised accordingly. Reckon those chord sequences in South African songs are familiar? Blame the church.

Numerous musical styles have been born out of oppression, too. Ladysmith Black Mambazo's 'tuptoe' *isicathimiya* music, with its high-kicking, soft-stepping dance, has its origins in the all-male miners' hostels in South Africa's Natal Province (now KwaZulu-Natal) in the 1930s, with workers at pains not to wake their bosses. *Kwela* music, like most modern South African styles, came out of the townships; *kwela*, meaning 'jump up', was the instruction given to those about to be thrown into police vans during raids. Thomas Maphumiso's *chimurenga* is once again the music of resistance in Zimbabwe, even if – for the majority of Zimbabwean musicians – outspokenness is just not the Zimbabwean way (see the boxed text, p53). Even the prolific Oliver 'Tuku' Mtukudzi (whose infectious dance pop, informed by the country's *jit-jive* and *tsava* rhythms, is known simply as 'Tuku music') has never done more than express his 'great disappointment'. (For more on Mtukudzi, see the boxed text, p701.)

In Malawi the deliberately controversial songs of reggae giant Lucius 'The Soldier' Banda has spawned a slew of similarly antsy reggae outfits; there is also a softer reggae led by Malawian Rastafarians and a sort of Afro-pop reggae courtesy of Kid Mkandawire. In post-apartheid South Africa, freedom of expression is pretty much expected: rap, hip-hop and their indigenous sibling *kwaito* are as socially concerned as they are un-PC, depending on who you're listening to. South African jazz remains some of the best in the world; the international success of the likes of Thandiswa from Bongo Maffin and Afropop outfit Freshlyground has new audiences in new countries taking notice.

The popular music of Southern Africa has created itself by mingling local ideas and forms with those from outside the region. And while every country has its own distinctive and constantly evolving array of styles supported by local audiences, that doesn't mean you won't be in one place and hear something from somewhere else.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

As with most traditional African instruments, the membranophones, chrodophones, aerophones and idiophones of Southern Africa (OK, it's drums and string, wind and percussion instruments) tend to be found in rural areas. Local materials and found objects are often used to musical effect. In Namibia and Zimbabwe they tie dry cocoons together and strap them to dancers' ankles and waists; in Swaziland and South Africa, ankles rattle with dried fruit. Right across the region, everything from seeds, sticks and stalks to horse hair, oryx horns and goat skins are being shaken and blown, plucked and beaten. Some people in Namibia customise their drums by carving human faces into them.

The MaNyungwe people of northeastern Zimbabwe and northwestern Mozambique play *nyanga* music on panpipes, using different interlocking

parts and quick bursts of singing in a sort of highly melodic musical round called *hocketting*. The Tonga people of Zambia do a similar thing with the animal horns called *nyele*. Variations on musical themes abound. The people of Sesfontein, Namibia play reed pipes made from papaya stems. Basotho herding boys fashion their *lekolulo* flutes from sticks, cords and reeds. Everywhere, too, there is men's music and women's music, just as there are men's dances and women's dances. In Lesotho men use their mouths to play the stringed *setolo-tolo*. Namibian women play the scraped mouth-resonated bow.

There is a huge variety of drums (*ngoma* is the general term in the Bantu language). Stick-struck and hand-struck. Square, round and goblet-shaped. Small cowhide-covered ones for Zulu children. *Khetebu* 'bush-tom' drums beloved by the South African Tsonga. *Namalwa* 'lion-drums' of Zambia, played by inserting a stick through the drum head and rubbing. High-pitched talking drums (which are more commonly found in West Africa), held tight under the armpit and beaten with hook-shaped sticks; the Chewa people of Zambia call theirs the *vimbuza*. Drum families – mother, father, son, played in sets of three – like the conical drums of the northeast of Namibia. Drums to accompany reed ensembles, a cappella groups and, more often than not, ankle-rattling dances.

If drums are the region's collective heartbeat, then the bow is its lonely soul. Southern Africa has several kinds of musical bow, many resembling the Brazilian *berimbau*: braced, mouth and/or gourd-resonated bows. Large hunting bows used as mouth bows. Two-stringed bows, played while simultaneously singing and resonating. Multiple bows with multiple strings. Mouth bows that use palm leaves instead of strings. String instruments abound: the lute (both strummed and bowed) is present in several forms. The Tswana of Botswana sing and strum the violin-like *segaba* (that's one string attached to a tin). The dances of the Nama of Namibia use flutes, drums and strings to emulate animal sounds.

The xylophone is also prevalent: the xylophone music of southern Malawi has influenced contemporary music in both East and Southern Africa. Mallet instruments with wooden keys are the main instrument of the Lozi and Nkoya of western Zambia, who place slats of wood over a long platform and gourds in descending size; up to four people play simultaneously. The marimbas of South Africa feed into the mbaqanga (township jive) style. It's an entirely different sound from that of the *mbila* (plural *timbila*) as played by the Chopi people of coastal Mozambique, which features resonators made from gourds and a buzzing tone created via a sheet of plastic (formerly an animal skin) over a hole in the ground. The master of *timbila* is the great Venancio Mbande, who rehearses with his large orchestra each Sunday afternoon at his house in the Zavala district.

But perhaps no instrument is as distinctively Southern African as the mbira, a hand-held instrument with small metal keys attached to an amplifying wooden box or calabash; attached shells and/or bottle tops distort and fuzz its sound. There are many traditions of so-called 'thumb pianos', each with a different name according to size and origin – it's the *kankobela* for the Tonga of Zambia. But it is Zimbabwe with which the mbira is generally identified: central to the Shona's marathon religious trance ceremonies known as *bira*, interlocking mbira patterns are considered both healing and spiritual. Since independence the mbira has been adapted to modern styles, such as the *chimurenga* guitars' bands.

Oh, and then there's the voice. Be they roaring Zulu choirs or clicking San, four-part Nama harmonies or ululating Zambian churchgoers, the people of Southern Africa really do sing up some glorious polyphonic storms. Keep an ear out.

Featuring music and interviews by Abdullah Ibrahim, Hugh Masekela and Miriam Makeba among others, Lee Hirsch's documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (2002) explores the role of music in the fight against apartheid. Made over nine years, this is a deeply affecting film.

Karoo Kitaar Blues (director Liza Key, 2003) is a documentary about a group of talented but isolated 'coloured' farm workers from South Africa's desolate Karoo region. Having developed a unique musical style played on homemade instruments, they eventually tour South Africa to rapturous response.

Radio Chikuni (www.chikuniradio.org) is a community radio station broadcasting from Zambia's Chikuni Mission Station. Dedicated to preserving Batonga music and culture.

Commissioned by the watchdog organisation Freemuse, *Shoot the Singer: Music Censorship Today* (ed Marie Korpe, 2004) is a fascinating book that surveys contemporary cases of music censorship worldwide for the first time. It includes a series of essays on South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's first feature film, *Jit* (director Michael Raeburn, 1993), is an endearing romantic comedy, lifted by its exotic setting and irresistible *jit-jive* soundtrack. Boy, who has a pesky, beer-obsessed ancestral spirit, decides to get girl – who happens to have a gangster boyfriend. Fun, uplifting stuff.

INTERVIEW WITH STELLA CHIWESHE

The majestic Stella Chiweshe has been performing with the mbira – the classic Zimbabwean thumb piano – for over 40 years. She is the first Southern African female mbira player to gain international recognition; her recordings capture the power and enchantment of this ancient instrument, traditionally revered as a medium of healing and of contact with ancestral spirits. Though based in Germany, Chiweshe recorded her latest offering, double album *Double Check* (Piranha), in Zimbabwe, though she was plagued by a range of distractions from petrol shortages to computer breakdowns. It features drums, guitars, marimbas – and the trancy, shimmering mbira sound.

'I first heard mbira from an old man when I was eight years old,' says Chiweshe, who was born in 1946 in Mujumhi, a village in Mhondoro, Zimbabwe. 'The people were listening to the drums, whose rhythm stayed so loud inside me I thought people could hear it.' She liked to accompany her grandfather on cattle-herding duty, insisting they go as far away as possible so she could sing loud and hard. Throughout her childhood – before independence and the success of the Second Chimurenga (1972–80) – mbiras were kept hidden, because the colonial government and the church had banned the instrument, fearing its power over the Shona.

Playing mbira was punished with prison and the ceremonies were secret: 'They told us when we were children to run away from people who played those instruments and to run towards the mission to tell the priest that we had seen the people of Diabore (Satan's people).' Chiweshe, the great-granddaughter of Munaka, a resistance fighter hanged by the British in days of the First Chimurenga (1896–97), was undeterred. She wasn't prepared to be limited by her sex, either. Her nonstop rhythm-making on any object she could find saw her creeping into ceremonies to watch. Only once did a man try to eject her: 'I screamed so much that I filled the house and they let me stay.'

By the time Chiweshe was 17 her passion to play mbira was like 'a ball of fire' and over the next decade, with the guidance of her uncle, she became a gifted *maridzambira* (mbira player), playing at healing ceremonies, weddings, funerals, concerts and parties, and even releasing a single, *Kasahwa*, in 1975, which went gold. After independence in 1980 she was invited to join the National Dance Company, newly formed to familiarise the liberated Zimbabweans of the richness of their cultural heritage. They toured throughout Zimbabwe, Mozambique and then Australia, India, North Korea and Europe. Chiweshe returned on solo tours.

Following the counsel of her spirit guide, she took the mbira to the denizens of Harare ('I was told that I must introduce this music to the city people') and to new generations in Zimbabwe and across the globe with her band, the Earthquake. So far she's recorded 22 local singles and seven international albums, been awarded an MA from Harare University, won two ZIMA Awards in 2005 and healed countless troubled souls.

MUSICAL STYLES

A rich network of musical styles has developed in Southern Africa. And although those of South Africa are probably the best known, the entire region is humming with musical traditions, expressions and textures. In most countries there are polyphony, repetitive patterns and call-and-response singing. There are styles that reflect ethnic diversity and geography. Cities are dominated by pop, rock, jazz and urban music, much of which combines core African principles with Western influences. Electric guitars fuel genres such as *afropa* in Malawi, *jit-jive* in South Africa, Zam-rock in Zambia. Local sounds keep migrating, metamorphosing. New genres keep forming. Following is a by-no-means definitive roundup of what is being listened to.

Chimurenga

In Zimbabwe in the late 1970s the musician Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited transferred traditional Shona mbira patterns to the electric guitar. They sang songs of resistance against the white-controlled Rhodesian government using bright, harmonised vocals. *Chimurenga*, meaning 'struggle',

Featuring big name UK and African live acts and DJs, the three-day Lake of Stars Malawi Music Festival is held on the palm-fringed shores of Lake Malawi each September. Attracts around 1500 punters; proceeds go to charity.

became a tool of social activism and, with lyrics in Shona, a secret means of communication. Banned by Zimbabwean state radio now as then, today's *chimurenga* bubbles away underground, in stark contrast to the apolitical, good-time *sungura* guitar music (the current industry's favoured genre) and bland Shona impersonations of hip-hop and regga (a dance-oriented style of reggae).

Gospel

Gospel music is huge everywhere. In Malawi spiritual songs are sung in church, at school assemblies and political functions, and during everyday tasks. Many of Zambia's Christian churches boast US-style gospel synthesizers and guitars. The effects of popular influences on the realm of the church can be heard in the music of top-sellers Zambian Acappella and the Glorious Hosanna Band. Traditional Botswanan music is present in their church singing. Zimbabwe's lucrative gospel market is dominated by Charles Charamba and his *sungura*-based songs (gospel singers in Zimbabwe are as big as the biggest popular music stars). South Africa is the really commercial holy roller: a mega-selling amalgam of European, American, Zulu and other African traditions, neatly divided into traditional and modern styles. Look out for Rebecca Malope, Youth in Action and the Soweto Gospel Choir.

Jazz

What Malawi calls 'jazz' began in the late 1960s when, inspired by South African *kwela* music, bands such as Chimvu Jazz featured semirural musicians on acoustic instruments – a tradition that continues today. In Botswana most popular music tends to be labelled 'jazz'; it is probably *gumba-gumba* ('party-party') music – modernised Zulu and Tswana music mixed with traditional jazz – that comes closest to it. Zambia's Zam-rock has its jazzy elements. But if you're after jazz that is structurally, harmonically and melodically distinctive – and is, unequivocally, jazz – then head to South Africa. What was famously an expatriate music representing the suffering of a people is now a thriving, progressive force. Arno Carstens, Moses Khumalo, Judith Sephumo, Yenana and myriad others are at the vanguard.

Kalindula

The urban dance style known as *kalindula* has its roots in the Bemba traditions of northern Zambia's Luapula Province – where a stringed instrument called the *babatone* swings like a double bass. Inspired (like many Southern

Held each July in Selebi-Phikwe, between Gaborone and Francistown, Botswana's National Music Eisteddfod showcases traditional dances and music from around the country, courtesy of its schools, colleges and choirs.

Dandemutande (www.dandemutande.org) is a resource for people who love Zimbabwean music and culture. Articles, mail order catalogue, discussion board, resource guide.

TOP 10 SOUTHERN AFRICAN ALBUMS

- *Rise Up* (Real World), Thomas Mapfumo
- *Double Check* (Piranha), Stella Chiweshe
- *Best of Miriam Makeba and the Skylarks* (BMG), Miriam Makeba
- *Soul Marrabenta* (Riverboat), Mabula
- *Shaka Zulu* (Warner), Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- *Urban Zulu* (Melt 2000), Busi Mhlongo
- *Indestructible Beat of Soweto Volume One* (Earthworks), various artists
- *Vana Va Ndota* (Milan), Ghorwane
- *Zambia Roadside* (Sharp Wood Productions), various artists
- *A Handful of Namibians* (On the Corner), various artists

African genres) by Congolese rumba, *kalindula* took hold in the mid-1970s in the wake of the presidential decree that 95% of broadcast music should be Zambian. Most *kalindula* bands broke up following the country's economic collapse in the 1990s. But with the likes of Brian Chilala fusing rock, reggae and *kalindula* beats, and the popularity of Black Muntu's 'kalifunku' sound, *kalindula* seems to be enjoying a renaissance.

Kwaito

Post 1994, *kwaito* (*kway-to*, meaning hot or angry) exploded onto South Africa's dance floors. A rowdy mix of bubblegum, hip-hop, R&B, ragga, mbaqanga, traditional, jazz, British and American house music – *kwaito* is nothing short of a lifestyle. Chanted or sung in township slang (usually over programmed beats), *kwaito*'s lyrics range from the anodyne to the fiercely political. Given an international lease of life as the soundtrack for the feature film *Tsotsi* (which bagged the 2006 Oscar for Best Foreign Film, and saw *kwaito* star Zola playing a gangster), *kwaito* is similarly huge across the Southern African region. It's Lesotho's favourite music style. If you're in Namibia, look out for Paul Gazza. In Zambia, try gospel *kwaito* act the Cherubs. If you're in South Africa, take your pick.

Kwasa kwasa

Beginning in Zaire in the mid-1980s and spreading quickly to surrounding areas, *kwasa kwasa* took its cue from Congolese rumba and soukous. Characterised by an all-important lead guitar and lighter background drumming, *kwasa kwasa* (from the French street slang, *quoi ca?* – what's this?) songs typically let guitar and drums set the pace before the vocals enter, with an intricate guitar solo somewhere in the middle. Arguments rage over whether *kwasa kwasa* is actually just rumba; for others it's simply a dance style. Everyone from politicians to street vendors knows how to do the *kwasa kwasa*, booties wildly gyrating – à la American hip-hop – while legs and torsos are kept still.

Marrabenta

Sounding a little like salsa or merengue, *marrabenta* is the best-known urban dance music in Mozambique, and one created from a fusion of imported European music played on improvised materials: oil cans, wooden stakes and fishing lines. Taking its name from the Portuguese word 'to break' (hard-playing musos frequently snapped their guitar strings), *marrabenta*'s local-language songs of love and social criticism were banned by Portuguese colonialists – ensuring its popularity post-independence. Stalwart *marrabenta* band Ghorwane uses horns, guitars, percussion and strong vocal harmonies; *marrabenta*-meets-hip-hop outfit Mabulu is making waves.

Rap & Hip-hop

The genre that was born in New York over three decades ago now has another home in (or has come back to) Africa – with some fascinating hybrids as a result. In Namibia, artist Yellow fuses reggae, hip-hop and his roots in the Nama culture. In Botswana, top-rating radio show *Strictly Hip Hop*, with presenters/rappers Draztik and Slim (from Cashless Society Crew), is transforming the local scene. Young Swaziland rap groups – and indeed, rap groups across Southern Africa – are using the medium to educate listeners about AIDS. South Africa's rappers are exploring uncharted territory: Tumi and the Volume combine *kwaito*, new school and house music and put politics centre stage. Jo'burg outfit Kwani Experience mould rap with African folk, jazz, drum 'n' bass and funk. The beat is 'somehow familiar yet like nothing that you've heard in these times', they say.

Celebrating peace, social harmony and international solidarity, Avante Mozambique! is Maputo's new two-week cultural tourism festival each August/September. Expect exhibitions, seminars, films and, of course, music.

Mozambique Music Magazine (www.mozambique-music.com) is a Maputo-based site, offering news about local events and music releases, Mozambican bands and music projects as well as info for visitors.

Yfm (www.yfm.co.za) is South Africa's most popular youth station, with a 50% self-imposed local music quota – more than any other station in the country.

Environment

Southern Africa's environment is as fragile as elsewhere on the continent, with exploitation and mismanagement the cause of many long-term problems. In order to ensure you have a minimal impact on this unique place, please keep in mind every visitor's shared responsibility (p26).

THE LAND

Southern Africa consists of a plateau rising from 1000m to 2000m, with escarpments on either side. Below the escarpments lies a coastal plain, which is narrowest in Namibia and widest in southern Mozambique.

The most prominent break in the Southern African plateau is the Great Rift Valley – a 6500km-long fissure where tectonic forces have attempted to rip the continent of Africa in two. This enormous fault in the earth's crust runs from the Jordan Valley (between Israel and Jordan) in the north, southward through the Red Sea, where it enters Ethiopia's Danakil Depression. At this point, it heads south across Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi, dividing in two at one stage, to form the great lakes of East Africa. Lake Malawi is the third-largest lake in Africa and lies in a trough formed by the valley. This feature has created unique fish life. The lake has more fish species than any inland body of water in the world – there are over 500, and 350 of these are endemic to the lake (see the boxed text, p199). This spreading zone ends at the present site of Lake Kariba (p703), between Zimbabwe and Zambia.

The highest part of the region is Lesotho (often called the Kingdom in the Sky) and the neighbouring Drakensberg area, where many peaks rise above 3000m, including Thabana-Ntlenyana (p146; 3482m), which is the highest point in Southern Africa. Other highland areas include the Nyika Plateau (in northern Malawi and northeastern Zambia; p181), Mt Mulanje (in southern Malawi; p219), the Eastern Highlands (between Zimbabwe and Mozambique; p706) and the Khomas Hochland (Central Namibia; p323).

These highlands provide jaw-dropping scenery, as well as some of the best-preserved and most distinctive plants, wildlife and ancient rock art (see the boxed text, p38) in the region. Hiking, climbing and mountain-biking are just some of the myriad activities on offer in these often wonderfully preserved patches of African wilderness.

Lower and more isolated hills include the characteristic inselbergs of Namibia (see Spitzkoppe, p347) and South Africa's Karoo (p488), and the lush Zomba Plateau (p210) in central Malawi.

WILDLIFE

Southern Africa contains some of the most accessible and varied wildlife watching found anywhere on the continent, and it's the major attraction of the region. Countries all over the region provide opportunities, and each has its highlights (even smaller countries such as Swaziland have magnificent wildlife viewing, which can offer great alternatives to better-known parks), but for sheer variety and numbers, South Africa and Botswana top the list.

The best times of day for wildlife viewing are early in the morning and in the late afternoon/evening, when many animals are looking for their next meal. Planting yourself at a water hole at these times can be very rewarding. Night safaris provide wonderful wildlife-viewing opportunities, especially to see many nocturnal animals such as genets and bushbabies (look in the trees, not just on the ground).

Earthlife Africa (www.earthlife.org.za) is an active environmental group operating in South Africa and Namibia; it's a good contact for anyone wanting to get involved.

Good safari companions: *Field Guide to Mammals of Southern Africa* and *A Field Guide to the Tracks and Signs of Southern and East African Wildlife* – both by Chris & Tilde Stuart – and *The Safari Companion: A Guide to Watching African Mammals* by Richard Estes.

Happily, Southern African parks are some of the best managed in Africa, and the development of the massive transfrontier parks (see the boxed text, p67) in the region, which link national parks and wildlife migration routes in different countries, should open up even more opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Animals

Nowhere else on the planet is there such a variety and quantity of large mammal species. Southern Africa boasts the world's largest land mammal (the African elephant), as well as the second largest (white rhino) and the third largest (hippopotamus). It's also home to the tallest (giraffe), fastest (cheetah) and smallest (pygmy shrew). You stand a great chance of seeing the Big Five – the black rhino, Cape buffalo, elephant, leopard and lion. However, the region also supports a wonderful array of birds, reptiles, amphibians and even insects (but often in less-appreciated quantities). The longer you spend in Southern Africa the more you'll appreciate the subtleties of the region, including the delight of spotting some of the less-famous species. If you're up for a challenge there's also a lesser-known 'Little Five' – the rhinoceros beetle, buffalo weaver, elephant shrew, leopard tortoise and ant lion. See the colour Wildlife Guide (p69) for a glimpse of the region's spectacular wildlife.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

After years of poaching, the black rhino is the highest-profile entry on Southern Africa's endangered species list (good places to spot these include Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park in South Africa, p512; Etosha National Park in Namibia, p332; and Mkhaya Game Reserve in Swaziland, p612); and the recent lifting of a hunting ban on this rare species seems ludicrous. See p68 for more on this issue. The beautiful African wild dog (seen with luck in Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park, p512, and Kruger National Park, p528), with its matriarchal system, is also listed as endangered, as are the mountain and Cape mountain zebra. The riverine rabbit is one of Southern Africa's most endangered mammals, while the hippopotamus and African lion are considered vulnerable in the wider region.

Turtles don't fair well, with the loggerhead, green turtle and olive ridley listed as endangered, while hawksbill and leatherback turtles are critically endangered.

BIRDS

Birds rate highly among the many attractions of Southern Africa. For sheer abundance and variety, few parts of the world offer as much for the bird-watcher, whether expert or beginner. Southern Africa is host to nearly 10% of the world's bird species – over 900 species have been recorded in the region. More than 130 are endemic to Southern Africa or are near-endemic, also being found only in adjoining territories to the north.

This astonishing variety can be attributed to the number of habitats. These habitats are well defined and can be separated into eight main categories: forest; savanna-woodland; fynbos; grassland-semidesert; Karoo (South Africa's desert-like interior); the Namib Desert; freshwater areas (rivers, marshes, lakes, pans and their adjoining shores); and seashore areas (including areas of brackish water where fresh water meets salt water in lagoons and estuaries).

All the national parks and reserves are home to a great range of bird life, especially Mana Pools (p705), Victoria Falls (p618) and Hwange (p723) National Parks in Zimbabwe; Etosha (p332), Mudumu (p345) and Mamili (p345) National Parks in Namibia; and Chobe National Park (p101) and virtually any part of the Okavango Delta (p106) in Botswana. Mozambique

Rhinos aren't named for their colour, but for their lip shape: 'white' comes from *wijde* (wide) – the Boers' term for the fatter-lipped white rhino.

The Johannesburg-based Endangered Wildlife Trust (www.ewt.org.za) is a good source of information on South Africa's endangered species with links to broader Southern African conservation projects.

Ian Sinclair's Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa by Ian Sinclair is a comprehensive work with colour plates of all avian species in the region. An abridged version, *Illustrated Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa*, concentrates on commonly observed species.

has over half of all bird species identified in Southern Africa; on Inhaca Island (p255) alone, about 300 bird species have been recorded.

Highlights in the region include the world's largest bird (the ostrich) and its heaviest flying bird (Kori bustard). Also in abundance are weavers, which share their huge city-like nests (often attached to telephone poles) with pygmy falcons, the world's smallest raptors. Also keep an eye out for majestic birds of prey such as the fish eagle, bateleur eagle, martial eagle, red-necked falcon

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WILD KIND

Although you'll hear plenty of horror stories, the threat of attack by wild animals in Africa is largely exaggerated and problems are extremely rare. However, it is important to remember that most African animals are *wild* and that wherever you go on safari, particularly on foot, there is always an element of danger.

The tips below will further diminish your chances of a close encounter of the unpleasant kind, and on organised safaris you should always get advice from your guide.

- Buffaloes are usually docile in a herd, but lone individuals can be unpredictable, making them particularly dangerous. If you encounter a buffalo while walking in the bush, back away quietly and slowly. If it charges, climb the nearest tree or dive into the bush and 'run like a rat'.
- Elephants are not bloodthirsty creatures, but those who have had trouble from humans previously may feel the need to go on the offensive. Lone males can be skittish, and a herd of females with baby elephants will almost always be protective and wary of an approach. Keep your distance – if an elephant holds its trunk erect and sniffs the air, it probably detects your presence and may charge rather than retreat. In this case you should be the one who retreats – but move away slowly.
- Hippos aren't normally vicious, but they may attack if you get too close or come between them and the water, or between adults and young. It's true that hippos kill more humans in Africa than any other animal. When boating or canoeing, paddle well away from them, and never pitch a tent in an open area along vegetated riverbanks, as it's probably a hippo run.
- Crocodiles also present risks, and when they're snoozing in the sun, they look more like logs or branches. Never swim, paddle or even collect water without first making a careful assessment of what's occupying the water in question. Local advice is best but, if it's not available, assume the worst.
- Hyenas are potentially dangerous, although they're normally just after your food. They aren't particularly fussy either: they'll eat boots and equipment left outside a tent, and have been known to gnaw right through vehicle tyres!
- Lions have also been known to investigate lodges and camp sites. If you're camping out in the bush, zip your tent up completely. If you hear a large animal outside, lie still and don't try to leave your tent. While walking in the bush, if you encounter a lion try to avoid an adrenalin rush (easier said than done), and don't turn and run. If you act like prey, the lion could respond accordingly.
- Rhinos tend to be wary of humans, although they may charge vehicles that get too close. Remember, too, that black rhinos are far more aggressive than white rhinos – unsurprising, as they were hunted almost to extinction. If you are caught out on foot and can't immediately climb a tree, face the charge and step to one side at the last moment in bullfight style (again, easier said than done).
- Most importantly, don't let the above scare you! Wildlife viewing just requires a bit of common sense, and by following a few simple guidelines you're sure to have a trouble-free experience. Remember that viewing wildlife in their natural habitat may present dangers not associated with a zoo, but it's a large part of what makes a visit to Southern Africa so special, and is incomparable to seeing an animal in a cage.

and chanting goshawk, as well as secretary birds, rollers, vividly coloured bee-eaters, sunbirds and rainbow-flecked kingfishers.

Bird-watching is good all year round, with spring (August to November) and summer the best.

REPTILES

Southern Africa's most notable reptile is the Nile crocodile. Once abundant in lakes and rivers across the region, its numbers have been greatly reduced by hunting and habitat destruction. Female crocs lay up to 80 eggs at a time, depositing them in sandy areas above the high-water line. After three months' incubation in the hot sand, the young emerge. New crocs are avocado green in colour; as they age, they darken to nearly black. Many live up to 70 years.

Southern Africa has a complement of both venomous and harmless snakes, but most fear humans and you'll be lucky to even see one. The largest snake – although generally harmless to humans – is the python, which grows to over

IVORY & ELEPHANT CULLING CONTROVERSY

A major issue all over Southern Africa concerns the emotive issue of elephant conservation. In the West people generally hold a preservationist viewpoint, that elephant herds should be conserved for their own sake or for aesthetic reasons; however, the local sentiment maintains that the elephant must justify its existence on long-term economic grounds for the benefit of local people, or for the country as a whole (a conservationist view). In fact, the same arguments can be applied to most other wildlife.

Since the 1970s various factors (especially the value of ivory) led to an increase in elephant poaching in many parts of Africa. By the late 1980s the price of 1kg of ivory (US\$300) was three times the *annual* income of over 60% of Africa's population. Naturally, the temptation to poach was great, although the real money was made not by poachers – often villagers who were paid a pittance for the valuable tusks – but by the dealers, who acted with the full knowledge (and support) of senior government figures. The number of elephants in Africa went from 1.3 million to 625,000 between 1979 and 1989, and in East Africa and in some Southern African countries – notably in Zambia – elephant populations were reduced by up to 90% in about 15 years. But in other Southern African countries where parks and reserves are well managed, in particular South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, elephant populations were relatively unaffected.

In 1989, in response to the illegal trade and diminishing numbers of elephants, a world body called the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) internationally banned the import and export of ivory. It also increased funding for anti-poaching measures. When the ban was established, world raw ivory prices plummeted by 90%, and the market for poaching and smuggling was radically reduced.

Although elephant populations recovered in some ravaged areas, Southern African human populations continued to grow, and another problem surfaced. Elephants eat huge quantities of foliage but, in the past, herds would eat their fill then migrate to another area, allowing time for the vegetation to regenerate. However, an increasing human population pressed the elephants into smaller and smaller areas – mostly around national parks – and the herds were forced to eat everything available. In many places, the bush began to look as if an atom bomb had hit. This also leads to human/elephant conflict: in far-north Mozambique, for example, elephants are eating and destroying crops, while drought in Zimbabwe has led to conflict between humans and elephants for water resources.

Increasingly across the region, park authorities are facing elephant overpopulation. Botswana, parts of Namibia's Caprivi region, Zimbabwe and South Africa's Kruger National Park are particularly affected. Proposed solutions include relocation (whereby herds are permanently transplanted to other areas) and contraception. The only other alternative is to cull herds, sometimes in large numbers; this seems a bizarre paradox, but illustrates the seriousness of the problem. The issue is currently being debated in South Africa. In Kruger, park authorities have recommended elephant

5m in length. The puff adder, which inhabits mainly mountain and desert areas, grows to about 1m long. Like all reptiles it enjoys sunning itself, but it is very slow and sometimes trodden on by unwary hikers – with very unpleasant results.

Other seriously dangerous snakes include the fat and lazy gaboon viper; the black mamba; the boomslang, which lives in trees; the spitting cobra, which needs no introduction; and the zebra snake, which is one of the world's most aggressive serpentine sorts. If you're tramping in snake country, be sure to watch your step.

Lizards are ubiquitous from the hot and dusty Kaokoveld in Namibia to the cool highlands of the Nyika Plateau in Malawi, and from the bathroom ceiling to the kitchen sink. The largest of these is the water monitor, a docile creature that reaches over 2m in length and is often seen lying around water holes, perhaps dreaming of being a crocodile. Two others frequently seen are chameleons and geckos – the latter often in hotel rooms; they are quite harmless and help to control the bug population.

For information on campaigns to save elephants and the fight against the illegal international trade in wildlife, see the International Fund for Animal Welfare (www.ifaw.org).

culling to return the population to around a manageable 7000 (down from the current 12,500). This has caused an outcry from some conservation groups such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), as culling has been banned for 10 years in South African parks. In early 2006 the South African government decided to postpone a decision regarding a cull, but it wasn't known for how long.

This is an issue sure to generate much debate, with proponents citing the health of the parks, including other wildlife and the elephants themselves, and organisations such as IFAW appalled at such a solution, which they claim is cruel, unethical and scientifically unsound. IFAW believes aerial surveys of elephant numbers are inaccurate, that population growth has not been accurately surveyed and, further, that other solutions have not been looked at carefully enough, including more transfrontier parks crossing national borders.

Southern African countries such as South Africa and Botswana currently have large ivory stockpiles due to natural attrition and through the seizure of illegal ivory hauls. Culling obviously provides large quantities of legal ivory too. In the past this could have been sold to raise funds for elephant management; however, the CITES ban stopped that.

In March 1999, however, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were permitted by CITES to resume strictly controlled ivory exports. Despite these measures, opponents of the trade warned that elephant poaching would increase in other parts of Africa, as poached ivory could now be laundered through the legal trade. Sure enough, 1999 saw an increase in poaching all over Africa, from Kenya to Gabon, and in late 1999 a Zimbabwean newspaper reported that 84 elephants had been poached in Zimbabwe that year.

At the 2002 CITES conference Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe requested limited sales of their existing ivory stockpiles. Botswana, Namibia and South Africa had only a one-off sale of 60 tonnes of ivory approved in principle, once certain conditions were met. However, this plan was put on ice by CITES in 2004 as the conditions set down in 2002 had not been met; particularly concerning was a solution on how to conduct sales without triggering poaching in vulnerable countries. Poaching is still a problem in Malawi for example – it was hurting the elephant population so badly in Kasungu National Park that the British military was called in 2005 to train game rangers in anti-poaching strategies.

There is much dispute about whether controlled ivory sales should be reintroduced, with Southern African countries with excessive elephant populations and large ivory stockpiles pushing hard for a relaxation of the ban. Some argue that Southern Africa is paying for the inability of other African countries to manage and protect their wildlife, and that the ban on the ivory trade is an unfair punishment to these countries.

It remains to be seen whether the ban will be lifted, but meanwhile debate about the ivory trade, and the culling solution to overpopulation, rages on.

Plants

The following rundown of major vegetation zones (arranged roughly south to north, and from the coasts to the inland areas) is greatly simplified, but provides a useful overview.

Southern Africa's distinctive fynbos zone occurs around the Cape Peninsula and along the south coast of South Africa, interspersed with pockets of temperate forest, where you'll find trees such as the large yellowwood, with its characteristic 'peeling' bark.

The west coast of Southern Africa consists largely of desert, which receives less than 100mm of precipitation per year. Vegetation consists of tough grasses, shrubs and euphorbias, plus local specialities, including the bizarre welwitschia (a miniature conifer) and kokerboom (a type of aloe).

Along the east coast of Southern Africa, the natural vegetation is coastal bush, a mixture of light woodland and dune forest; high rainfall has also created pockets of subtropical forest.

In South Africa's Karoo, typical vegetation includes grasses, bushes and succulents that bloom colourfully after the rains. Much original Karoo vegetation has been destroyed since the introduction of grazing animals and alien plants (see below).

To the east lie the temperate grasslands of the 'highveld' and to the north, a vast arid savanna, characterised by acacia scrub, which takes in most of central Namibia, much of Botswana and the northern parts of South Africa.

To the north and east is the woodland savanna, consisting of mainly broadleaf deciduous trees. Dry woodland, dominated by mopane trees, covers northern Namibia, northern Botswana, the Zimbabwean lowveld and the Zambezi Valley. In wetter areas – central Zimbabwe, northern Mozambique and most of Zambia and Malawi – the dominant vegetation is moist woodland, or miombo. A mix of the two, which occurs in northeastern South Africa and central Mozambique, is known as mixed woodland, or 'bushveld'.

Small pockets of high ground all over the region have a vegetation zone termed afro-montane, which occurs in highland areas where open grasslands are interspersed with heathland and isolated forests.

INTRODUCED SPECIES

Introduced plant species present a real threat to Southern African ecosystems. There are more than 700 alien plant species in the region, and about 10% of these are classed as invasive aliens – that is, they thrive to the detriment of endemic species. For example, Australian wattle trees and Mexico mesquite flourish by sinking their roots deeper into the soil than indigenous trees, the latter suffering from lack of nourishment. The Australian hakea shrub was introduced to serve as a hedge, and is now rampant, displacing native trees and killing off smaller plants. Areas such as South Africa's unique Cape fynbos floral kingdom are threatened by Australian acacias, which were introduced for their timber products, or to stabilise sand dunes.

Many rivers and dams are also clogged with invasive species and introduced European grasses, especially on sand dunes, are also a threat. Recognition of these problems means that alien plants, originally introduced as commercial plants or as ornamental garden plants, may often not be grown on public or private property.

NATIONAL PARKS

The term 'national park' is often used in Southern Africa as a catch-all term to include wildlife reserves, forest parks, or any government conservation area; there are also several privately owned reserves.

The beauty of the parks and reserves is that they all have an individual identity – a unique character born from the varied landscapes, wildlife and vistas. Happily, this means you can spend a lot of time visiting parks and never get bored!

Most parks in Southern Africa conserve habitats and wildlife species and provide recreational facilities for visitors. South African parks are among the best managed in the world, and most of the rest are very good, although Zimbabwean parks have declined and those in Mozambique are still being developed.

In most parks and reserves harbouring large (and potentially dangerous) animals, visitors must travel in vehicles or on an organised safari, but several do allow hiking or walking with a ranger or safari guide.

Nearly all parks charge an entrance fee, and in almost all cases foreigners pay substantially more than local residents or citizens. This may rankle some visitors – and some parks are seriously overpriced – but the idea is that residents and citizens pay taxes to the governments that support the parks, and therefore are entitled to discounts.

Park Accommodation

Most parks and reserves contain accommodation, so you can stay overnight and take wildlife drives in the early morning and evening. Accommodation ranges from simple camp sites to luxury lodges run by companies that have concessions inside the parks. Prices vary to match the quality of facilities. In some countries you can just turn up and find a place to camp or stay; in other countries reservations are advised (or are essential at busy times). For details, see individual country chapters.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

All over Southern Africa, an ever-growing human population places demands on the land and other natural resources. To conserve these resources – and the region's wild areas and ecosystems – most experts agree that population growth must be contained by improving education (especially for women) and raising living standards by fostering economic growth. Human–elephant conflict, for example, is becoming a problem in areas such as Mozambique (p245), where elephants eat and destroy crops in large areas of Niassa province, as well as in coastal sections of Quirimbas National Park and elsewhere in the north.

Land degradation is a serious regional problem; about one quarter of South Africa's land is considered to be severely degraded (see p413). In former Homeland areas, years of overgrazing and overcropping have resulted in massive soil depletion. This, plus poor overall conditions, is pushing people to the cities, further increasing urban pressures. Lesotho has severe land erosion (see p140) due to large-scale ploughing and introduced merino sheep and mohair goats.

Water is another issue and droughts are common in the region (see the boxed text, p43). To meet demand rivers have often been dammed or modified. While this has improved water supplies to some areas, it has also disrupted local ecosystems and caused increased siltation.

Deforestation wreaks havoc across Southern Africa, especially when indigenous trees are replaced by more aggressive introduced species. In Malawi (p166) the level of use of wood for fuel is very high and because of food insecurity, people increasingly rely on woodlands to serve their needs. Illegal timber practices are more difficult to combat, with entrenched interests at every level. An illustration of the challenges is seen in northern and central Mozambique, where tropical hardwoods are felled with little or no regulation.

Trees of Southern Africa by Keith Coates Palgrave provides the most thorough coverage of the subcontinent's arboreal richness, illustrated with colour photos and paintings.

Flowers of Southern Africa by Auriol Batten is less a field guide than a large-format celebration of major flowering species, illustrated with colourful paintings.

See www.peaceparks.org for all the latest news on the transfrontier parks in the region, including a map of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park.

The Southern African regional office of the International Conservation Union (www.iucnrosa.org.zw) has plenty of detail on projects involving wetlands, forests, biodiversity and plenty more.

NATIONAL PARKS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Southern Africa's national parks are simply outstanding. Facilities, geography and wildlife-viewing opportunities vary considerably across the region though. World-famous national parks such as Kruger, Etosha, South Luangwa and Chobe offer excellent wildlife viewing, usually with a dazzling array of accommodation options, while lesser-known parks and reserves such as Hlane Royal National Park (p611) or Mkhaya Game Reserve (p612) in Swaziland are real gems. The latter are usually smaller and often quieter than their more famous counterparts, with rewarding wildlife-viewing and bird-watching opportunities. Below is a sample of the parks in the region:

Botswana

- Makgadikgadi & Nxai Pans (p100) – vast and remote, this is the site of Southern Africa's last great wildlife migrations.
- Chobe (p101) – a large and varied park with both a wildlife-rich riverfront and broad savanna plains. It's particularly known for its large elephant herds.
- Moremi (p114) – this beautiful park takes in a portion of the expansive and stunning Okavango Delta.
- Central Kalahari (p119) – Botswana's largest national park takes in the widest horizons you're ever likely to see.

Malawi

- Liwonde (p206) – a magical lowland park with wonderful bird life, including a stunning rainbow-flecked kingfisher population, excellent elephant and hippo viewing, and plans to reintroduce lions and rhinos.
- Mt Mulanje (p219) – the 'island in the sky', with sheer peaks and excellent hiking.
- Nyika (p181) – unique montane grassland area, with endless views and splendid horse riding.
- Lengwe (p224) – this lovely park in southern Malawi protects a range of antelopes (including the rare nyala), as well as diverse bird species.

Mozambique

- Bazaruto Archipelago (p267) – a tropical paradise of reefs, islands and beaches, and opportunities for sailing and diving.
- Great Limpopo Transfrontier – the former Limpopo National Park (p260) has been combined with South Africa's Kruger (p528) and Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou (p717) parks to form this enormous conservation area. Mozambique's portion was devastated by war, but has now been stocked with wildlife from elsewhere.

Namibia

- Waterberg Plateau Park (p328) – this sky island features walking tracks and a repository for endangered wildlife.
- Fish River Canyon (p385) – Africa's grand canyon presents one of the most spectacular scenes on the continent and Namibia's most popular hiking track.
- Etosha (p332) – this vast park is one of Africa's most renowned wildlife-viewing venues – and deservedly so. It features an enormous pan and numerous water holes, and is one of the best places in the region to see black rhinos.
- Namib-Naukluft (p367) – one of the world's largest national parks, this stunning and magical desert wilderness takes in world-famous sand dunes and wild desert mountains, with excellent hiking.

South Africa

- Drakensberg (p516) – this mountain region may be low on the Big Five, but it's high on awe-inspiring mountain scenery, rock art and extensive hiking opportunities.
- St Lucia (p513) – this coastal wetland in a remote part of the country presents a unique ecosystem of global significance.

- Tsitsikamma (p466) – a lovely coastal park with forests, fynbos, beaches, rocky headlands and a world-renowned hiking trail.
- Hluhluwe-Imfolozi (p512) – near the Zulu heartland, this bushland park is best known for its rhino populations.
- Kruger (p528) – South Africa's most popular national park covers an enormous area and offers the classic wildlife experience, while boasting top-notch facilities.
- Pilanesberg (p569) – protects an unusual complex of extinct volcanoes with towering rocky outcrops and an impressive variety and number of wildlife, including wild dogs.

Zambia

- Kafue (p666) – massive and genuinely wild, with an impressive range of habitats and wildlife.
- Kasanka (p651) – pioneering, privately managed park, noted for sightings of the rare sitatunga antelope.
- Lower Zambezi (p655) – spectacular setting, escarpments and plains, plus the great river itself. It's best appreciated on multiday canoe trips.
- South Luangwa (p658) – this wild and pristine wildlife park is growing more popular, but many still consider it 'Africa's best-kept secret'.
- Mosi-oa-Tunya (p625) – taking in both Zambia's portion of Victoria Falls and a small game park, this park is one of the country's most visited attractions.

Zimbabwe

- Matusadona (p705) – with both lakefront and mountain habitats south of Lake Kariba, this rewarding wildlife park is known for its enormous buffalo herds and lion populations.
- Nyanga (p710), Bvumba (p708), Chimanimani (p714) – these three parks in the misty Eastern Highlands offer mountain retreats and excellent hiking opportunities.
- Hwange (p723) – Zimbabwe's best-known wildlife park holds one of the most dense wildlife populations in Africa. It's conveniently close to Victoria Falls.
- Mana Pools (p705) – combines the Zambezi Escarpment, a swathe of bushland and beautiful riverine scenery to create a varied wildlife experience. Canoe safaris are popular.

Transfrontier Peace Parks

In addition to national parks there are several transfrontier parks at various stages of completion. These mammoth ventures cross national borders and are flagship conservation ventures designed to re-establish age-old migration routes. They include the following:

- Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (p462) – combines Northern Cape's old Kalahari Gemsbok National Park with Botswana's Gemsbok National Park
- Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park – this spreads nearly 100,000 sq km (larger than Portugal) across the borders of South Africa (Kruger; p528), Mozambique (former Limpopo National Park; p260) and Zimbabwe (Gonarezhou; p717)
- Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park – incorporates the spectacular desert mountain scenery of Ai-Ais Hot Springs Game Park (p385) in Namibia and the Richtersveld National Park (see the boxed text, p465) in South Africa
- Limpopo/Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area – a proposed conservation area straddling the borders of South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe
- Maloti/Drakensberg Transfrontier Project – a project (with a completion date of 2007) to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains

Malawi and Zambia have agreed to set up the first transfrontier park outside South Africa. The proposed area combines the Nyika Plateau on both sides of the border, Malawi's Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve and Kasungu National Park, with Zambian forest reserves, Musalangu Game Management Area and Lukusuzi National Park.

HUNTING – ANIMAL WELFARE VS ECONOMICS

In some parts of Southern Africa, areas of land are set aside for hunting, and hunters are charged 'trophy fees' to shoot animals. This is abhorrent to many people – especially in Western countries.

On the one hand it is argued that trophy or sport hunting is a form of tourism that stimulates local economies and thereby fosters 'conservation-minded' attitudes. For people who lack other resources the trophy fees are large (thousands of US dollars for animals such as elephants or lions) and an invaluable source of income. Paradoxically, the financial benefits of hunting tourism encourages the management and protection of these animals and their environment. Hunting, it is argued, provides an enticement to landowners to maintain the natural habitats that provide a home for the hunted animals.

On the other hand, killing an animal for fun is simply morally and ethically wrong to many people, and this is accentuated once the beauty, grace and intelligence of many African animals is witnessed in the wild. Can killing for fun ever be justified in a modern society? Hunters claim that killing is not the purpose of hunting; instead, it's all about outwitting and learning behavioural patterns of their prey. Then why not take a camera instead of a rifle?

It is also argued that slaughtering wildlife in order to raise conservation funds to save it is a twisted way of thinking. Further, improperly managed, trophy hunting can have seriously detrimental effects on wildlife, especially threatened and endangered species.

Although conservation organisations do not agree on policy towards hunting, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has a pragmatic attitude, stating that 'for endangered species, trophy hunting should only be considered when all other options have been explored...and that trophy hunting, where it is scientifically based and properly managed, has proven to be an effective conservation and management method in some countries and for certain species'.

In 2004, CITES lifted a ban on hunting the black rhino, once a potent symbol of endangered African animals, allowing an annual hunt quota of five each for South Africa and Namibia. Conservationists opposed to the move say that the rhino is still a target for poachers, with its horn being highly valued in Asia and the Middle East. It is claimed that hunting quotas would make it far easier to cover up the illegal trade of rhino horns from poached animals. Also, the black rhino remains critically endangered in most countries outside Southern Africa. Namibia and South Africa have pledged to spend the substantial revenues to improve conservation in their countries.

In 2006 South Africa proposed a new law that would end the practice of 'canned hunting', in which wildlife bred in captivity are killed by tourists in sealed reserves. The law would make breeding predators like cheetahs, lions or leopards specifically for hunting illegal. The average price paid for canned hunting of a white rhinoceros is US\$25,000.

Poaching is still a problem in countries such as Malawi and has increased dramatically in Zimbabwe since the land seizures where world-class parks and anti-poaching policies are under threat.

Many Africans believe conservation for its own sake is a luxurious Western notion that the people of Southern Africa simply cannot afford. To concede the benefits of conservation, locals need to see some of these benefits, and that's where tourism comes in. If the money earned from visitors coming to enjoy the animals and the environment stays in the pockets of locals (or in the country as a whole), then this will encourage wildlife and environmental protection.

Income is also generated by the jobs that hunting and wildlife tourism create, such as guides, game rangers, tour guides and various posts in the associated hotels, lodges and camps. Further spin-offs include the sale of crafts and curios.

For community initiatives and projects designed to combat local issues, as well as examples of ecotourism, see the Environment section in country-specific chapters.

Wildlife Guide

Southern Africa's animal kingdom will captivate, mesmerise and provide you with an unforgettable experience of the region. Thanks to its varied terrain, Southern Africa hosts an amazing diversity of species and you're practically guaranteed to see plenty of hoofed, tusked, winged and other creatures, not to mention the fabled big cats and great herd animals.

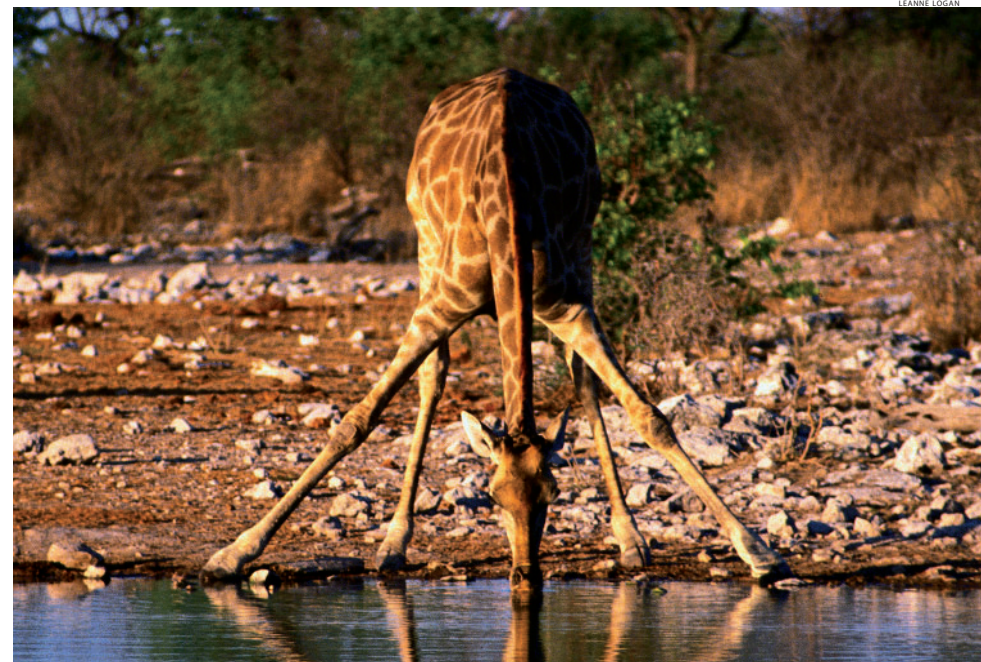
The beauty of the wildlife is not just the Big Five (lion, leopard, Cape buffalo, black rhino and elephant) either. You may be entertained by the clownish antics of the dwarf mongoose, captivated by the speed and grace of a cheetah, awed by the beauty of a gemsbok, outraged at the cheek of a curious baboon or startled at the rippling power of a hippo.

Habitat plays a big role when watching wildlife in Southern Africa – the animals are a part of this land, and when you see their interactions with the temperate grasslands, dry woodland or arid savanna, you'll know that you're seeing Africa.

As wildlife tourism is one of the main sources of revenue for conservation efforts in Southern Africa, the money you spend in national parks and reserves is often ploughed back into these areas, thus ensuring the protection and sustainability of these magnificent creatures.

The following tips will help you get the most out of wildlife watching:

- Wildlife viewing is generally best in the dry season, when sparse vegetation opens up the view and thirsty animals congregate around water sources.
- Be patient – take time to notice the environment. After spotting an animal, stop to look around and you'll usually notice a lot more activity. Staking out a water hole for several hours will almost always reward you with a greater understanding of what's going on.
- Warthogs, baboons, zebras, giraffes and many antelope species happily associate with each other, so it's common to see several species at once. However, the presence of feeding herbivores doesn't preclude the possibility of a predator nearby, so be alert for stalking lions.
- Don't forget your binoculars, which will allow you to turn a speck in the distance into something much more interesting, and will enhance bird-watching opportunities.





ANDREW PARKINSON

Lion

Lions are surprisingly easy to spot in Southern Africa. They have a wide habitat tolerance, spend most of their days lying about and largely ignore the sounds of camera shutters snapping. To see this massive predator in top form, arrange for a guided night drive – lions prefer to hunt under the cover of darkness.

Size: Shoulder height 1.2m; length 2.5m to 3m, including tail up to 1m; weight up to 260kg (male), 180kg (female).

Distribution: Largely confined to protected areas and present in all savanna and woodland parks in the region.



ANDREW PARKINSON



ADRIAN BAILEY



ANDREW PARKINSON



DENNIS JONES

African Elephant

The largest land mammal is also one of the most social, and it is very common to see tremendous herds of elephants in Botswana and Namibia. Elephants drink an average of 65 litres of water per day, so it's usually safe to assume that they're congregating near a water source.

Size: Shoulder height up to 4m (male), 3.5m (female); weight 5 to 6.5 tonnes (male), 3 to 3.5 tonnes (female). **Distribution:** Widely distributed in the region, though large populations occur only in protected areas.



ANDREW PARKINSON



ADRIAN BAILEY

African Buffalo

The African buffalo is regarded as the most dangerous of the Big Five, primarily because it will incessantly pursue a perceived attacker. Furthermore, solitary males employ the 'attack is the best defence' tactic, though large herds are fairly relaxed and unlikely to charge. Buffalo herds have fairly predictable movements, seeking out good grazing and water during the early morning and late afternoon.

Size: Shoulder height 1.6m; weight 400kg to 900kg; horns up to 1.25m long; female somewhat smaller than male.

Distribution: Widespread, but large populations occur only in parks.



DAVE HAMMAN



Hotels & Hostels

REVIEWED &
RECOMMENDED

Want the best hotel picks the planet has to offer?

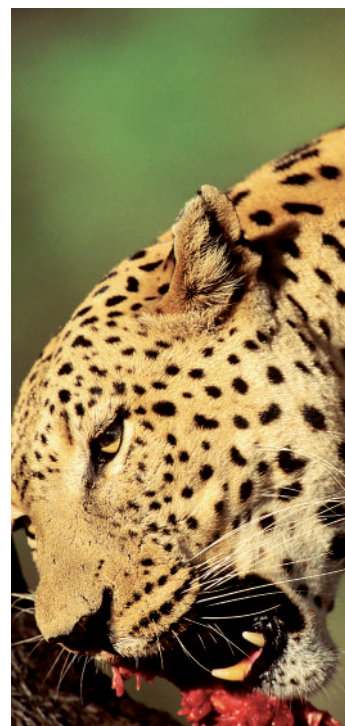
Our wide-roaming authors have selected their favourite properties from all over the world – check out their independent reviews and recommendations and book online.

lonelyplanet.com/hotels

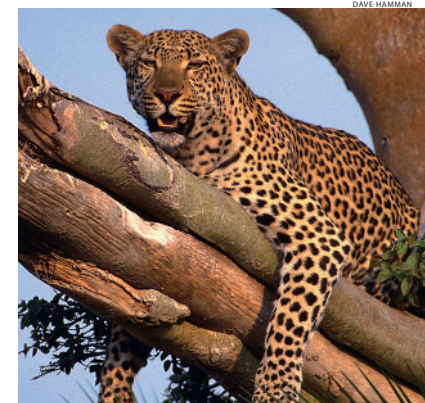
Leopard

Africa's most common cat, the leopard, is also its most difficult to spot. True to their feline roots, leopards spend most of their days sleeping in the tree tops (which is where they also store kills). The services of a well-trained guide are invaluable if you want to spot a leopard. However, rare sightings do occur in the open, particularly in woodland-savanna mosaics.

Size: Shoulder height 50cm to 75cm; length 1.6m to 2.1m, including 70cm to 1.1m tail; weight up to 90kg; male larger than female. **Distribution:** Widely spread throughout the region, they also persist in human-altered habitat due to their adaptability.



CHRISTER FREDRIKSSON



DAVE HAMMAN

lonelyplanet.com

The latest travel information and advice from the global travel community.
Your place to dream, plan, book and talk about independent travel.



Black Rhinoceros

Black rhinos are edgy and nervous animals. When disturbed, they are quick to flee, though they will confront an aggressor head-on, particularly if offspring are present. As a result, they are difficult to observe in the wild, and are fewer in number than white rhinos. Black rhinos can be identified by their triangular (rather than square) lip and the lack of a neck hump.

Size: Shoulder height 1.6m; length 3m to 4m; weight 800kg to 1.4 tonnes; front horn up to 1.3m long.

Distribution: Restricted to relict populations in a few reserves (highly endangered).



DENNIS JONES



MITCH REARDON



ANDREW PARKINSON

Steenboks are one of seven small species of antelopes that operate in monogamous pairs. They usually graze by day but will raid crops by night with astonishing stealth.

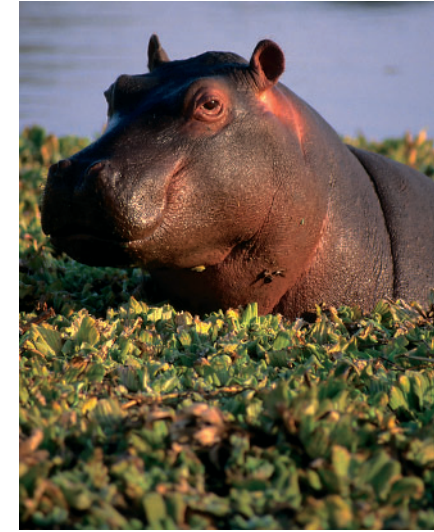
The world's fastest land mammal, cheetahs can reach speeds over 105km/h, but become exhausted after a few hundred metres and therefore stalk prey to within 60m before unleashing their tremendous acceleration. On average, only one in four hunts is successful.



DAVE HAMMAN

The hippopotamus is found close to fresh water where it spends the majority of its day before emerging at night to graze. It is distantly related to the domestic pig.

CAROL POLICH



Zebra are dependent on water and are rarely found more than an easy day's walk away. Lions converge on water holes to lay ambushes. Single lions are able to take down a zebra, but it's a dangerous task; zebras defend themselves with lethal kicks that easily break a jaw or leg.

ANDREW PARKINSON



JASON EDWARDS

Meerkats have refined keeping a lookout to a dedicated art. While the troop forages for scorpions, insects and lizards, a lone sentinel watches for eagles and jackals. One shrill alarm shriek from the guard and the band rushes for cover.

Baboons live in troops of eight to 200; contrary to popular belief, there is no single dominant male. Social interactions are complex, with males accessing only certain females, males forming alliances to dominate other males, and males caring for unrelated juveniles.

DAVE HAMMAN



© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'