



## Introduction

Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site is the ideal location for anyone interested in the park's wildlife and birds, to those in search of serenity, identity and the extraordinary history of this World Heritage Site...

Come and join these diverse pilgrims and share unforgettable moments sipping sundowners at the confluence of the legendary Limpopo and Shashe Rivers, watch the eagles soar over Botswana and Zimbabwe's skies, hear the echo of elephant trumpets, take a tree top walk or just relax and absorb the surroundings... Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site is rich in biodiversity, great scenic beauty and the cultural importance of the archaeological treasures of Mapungubwe.

## Areas of Special Interest

**The Lost City:** Visit Mapungubwe Hill, where a far developed African civilisation prospered between 1200 and 1270 AD. The area was already inhabited by a growing Iron Age community from 900 AD and became rich through trade with faraway places like Egypt, India and China. This is the place where archeologists excavated the famous golden rhino and other evidence of a wealthy African kingdom.

**Wildlife and Mystic Scenery:** Sandstone formations, mopane woodlands and unique riverine forest and baobab trees form the astounding scenic backdrop for a rich variety of animal life. Elephant, giraffe, white rhino, eland, gemsbok and numerous other antelope species occur naturally in the area. Lucky visitors might spot predators like lions, leopards and hyenas. Birders can tick off 400 species, including kori bustard, tropical boubou and pel's fishing owl.

**Joining Nations:** The Iron Age civilization of Mapungubwe was not limited by the Limpopo river and animals have always been able to wander around in the area of present-day South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. This is why South Africa signed a memorandum of understanding with Botswana and Zimbabwe on June 22nd setting out principles for the Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA).

## Accommodation

### Activities

### Visit the Confluence

Enjoy a view over the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo rivers where three countries meet...

There is a picnic site with ablution facilities at the Confluence with shaded picnic spots with tables and taps. You can also hire a skottel braai and stock up on cooldrinks at the tuck shop.

### Vhembe Wilderness Camp

The Vhembe Wilderness Trails Camp is about 14km from the main gate. The camp is situated on the eastern side of the park on the sandstone rocks not 5km away from the mighty Limpopo River. The units are made of canvas and wooded plank on the sides, wooden floors and thatch roofs with netted windows. There are 4 cabins at the camp that can accommodate 8 people per night. The trail camp units are as follows:

Camp	Accommodation	Activities	Tariffs	Additional Information
Vhembe Wilderness	- 4 X Wilderness	All activities are	R1060.00 for the first	No meals are provided

Trail camp	Cabin each with two single beds, a fan, ensuite showers and a toilet. The camp is booked by only one family at a time.	booked separately from accommodation. They are optionally extra at an additional price	four people. The additional price person R290.00 adults and R145.00 for extra child	We use solar and gas system No plugs Conservation is charged separate per day.
	- A central kitchen with a gas stove, fridges, braai area, a fan, a dining area with chairs.			

## Heritage Tours

As part of this tour, you will be given the opportunity to visit the elite graveyard at the top of Mpaungubwe Hill, view a natural amphitheatre and the entire spectrum of the region... traverse the territory once walked upon by the ancestral Mapungubwe People ... now roamed by four of the Big 5.

*\*\*Please note: Meals optional @ R220 per person. These include food, drinks and snacks (No alcohol). Visitors are encouraged to bring their own food.\*\**

## Do the Tree Top Walk or a Game Drive

Take a walk among the riverine forest on a raised canopy walk that takes you to a hide over looking the Limpopo River.

**\*\*\*Tariffs are effective from November 2010\*\*\***

<b>Tours/Drives/Walks</b>	<b>Departure Time</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Tariff per person</b>
Heritage Tour	07:00 & 10:00	2-3 hours	R160
Sunset Drive	16:00	2 hours	R190 (child: R90)
Night Drive	19:30	2-3 hours	R190 (child: R90)

\* Guided Walks are also available. Please contact the park for more information on this activity.

\* Please note that all activities can be booked by e-mailing [Mapungubwe National Park](mailto:Mapungubwe National Park) or calling +27 (0)15 534 2014 They are subject to the availability of qualified staff and vehicles, and thus, they may not be always available.

## [Follow the Route of Lost Kingdoms](#)

The Route of Lost Kingdoms stretches from inside the gates of the Kruger National Park at the ancient stone wall site of Thulamela, follows a trail of myths and legends to the Mapungubwe World Heritage site and onwards to the small town of Alldays. The route gives tourists the opportunity to explore this undiscovered region in the north of South Africa, bordering Botswana and Zimbabwe.

## History of the Park

### [Kings & Riches](#)



What makes Mapungubwe a World Heritage Site and a place of pilgrimage for Africans is the amazing history of Mapungubwe Hill and its surroundings.

The people that inhabited this area between 900 and 1270 AD were cattle and crop farmers who extensively participated in the Indian Ocean trade with Egypt, India and China. Their wealth and the physical division between the sacred leader and the commoners were a first for Southern Africa – the disbanding of the kingdom still puzzles scientists.

### [Rocking Art](#)

Mapungubwe also speaks of earlier times of human habitation. The San and their forebears roamed the area for the last 5.000 years. They left over 150 (documented) rock art sites in the Limpopo/Shashe confluence area, a rich library of painted and engraved images that provide insight into the world and beliefs of these hunter-gatherers. Depiction of kudus is very typical for the rock art shelters in this area.

### [Park in Progress](#)

From the rediscovery of Mapungubwe in 1932 to the Battle of Dongola – the recent history that ultimately led to the proclamation of the park is intriguing. The battle for example was a public and parliamentary debate which in 1947 culminated in a protected area of 92.000 hectares. A year later the Nationalist Party won the elections and disbanded the park. With the proclamation of Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site history is now full circle.

## Tariffs

- [General Tariffs Information](#)
- [Pensioners' Discount](#)
- [Daily Conservation Fee](#)
- *Members of SANParks' loyalty programme WILD do not pay conservation fees provided that proof of Identity and their WILD card are shown on arrival.*
- [Cost of a Wild Card](#)
- [View accommodation pictures and availability for Mapungubwe National Park](#)

### **Daily Conservation Fees for 1 November 2011 to 31 October 2012**

South African Citizens and Residents (with ID):	R27 per adult, per day R14 per child, per day
SADC Nationals (with passport):	R54 per adult, per day R27 per child, per day
Standard Conservation Fee (Foreign Visitors):	R108 per adult, per day R54 per child, per day

## Vital Information

### Internal Road Network

Approximately 35km of roads are suitable for normal sedan vehicles. A further 100 km is accessible to all terrain (4x4) vehicles. Fill up your fuel tank at Alldays/ Musina as you cannot buy petrol at the park.

## Vehicle Restrictions

No caravans are allowed in the eastern section of the park due to roads conditions. We have a caravan park at Mazhou camping site on the western section of the park.

## Fuel Stations: Petrol/ Diesel

There is no fuel station inside the park. The closest fuel station is at Dongola filling station about 30km east of the park. The other filling stations are in Musina 70km and All days 65km from the main gate.

## Day Visitors

Entry is via the SANParks Wild Card system, or payment at the gate.

## Official hours

- **Reception:**  
From 06:00 to 18:30 from September to March  
From 06:30 to 18:00 from April to August
- **Gate opening and closing times**  
From 06:00 to 18:30 from September to March  
From 06:30 to 18:00 from April to August
- **Check-in / check-out**  
Check-in is from 12:00 to 18:00 and check-out is before 10:00.

## Climate

The climate is semi-arid with mean annual rainfall ranging from 350mm - 400mm. Rainfall is highly variable and usually falls during the summer months. Extended periods of below average rainfall occur. In summer temperatures sometimes rise to 45°C. The winters are mild.

Summer can be hot, but bearable and enjoyable if planned correctly. Early summer mornings and afternoons are the most rewarding in the park, for birds, trees and game. Winters are mild. There is on average 10 rainy days per year.

## Hints & Tips

- Mapungubwe National Park is an area with large and dangerous game animals and unguided walking is not permitted. Guests, who would like to arrange activities such as walks, drives and visits to cultural attractions, can do so directly with Mapungubwe.
- Guests should take precautions against malaria when visiting Mapungubwe.
- All Mapungubwe's camps are accessible by normal sedan vehicles, as are many of the roads inside the Park. There are also a number of eco-trails for which a 4x4 is required.
- The closest shops and fuel supplies to Mapungubwe are in Alldays and Musina, both about 70 km's from the Park.

## What visitors need to take:

- There are no shops at Mapungubwe. The units are self catering and fully equipped. Take all food, drinks and firewood. The Vhembe Trails Camp is catered, but take your own drinks.
- Sunscreen, hat, binoculars, field guides, liquids for drinking.
- Fill up your fuel tank at Alldays/ Musina.

## Conservation

The significance of the Mapungubwe National Park and the areas surrounding it is enhanced by the potential role of the area as a sanctuary for viable populations of some of the most threatened large mammals on earth, such as the black rhinoceros, wild dog, cheetah, brown hyena and elephant. It also is one of the last protected areas of the Limpopo riverine forest.

- [Roaming cattle in the Park](#)

## Scientific Services

The area has tremendous potential for research, both cultural and biological. Currently there is an Elephant Project and numerous cultural research projects.

## Projects

Poverty Relief projects worth R48 million was completed during 2002-2004. These projects provided work to more than 1 000 people. A next round of projects is planned for 2005-2007. With this funding the park intend to built an Interpretive Centre and rehabilitate numerous aspects of the park.

## Contact Information

- E-mail: [Mapungubwe National Park](#)
- Reception numbers: (015) 534 7923/24
- Hospitality Manager: (015) 534 7923/24
- Park Manager and Interpretation Centre: (015) 534 7925
- Tele-fax: (015) 534 7926
- Duty Manager & Emergency Numbers: 076 587 0206/ 084 700 4367

## Cultural Tourism

South African National Parks (SANParks) has established itself as a reputable nature based tourism destination within the global tourism market.

Limitations of past apartheid and conservation laws have, in the past, inhibited SANParks' ability to explore and promote a variety of community linked tourism opportunities as well as an exploration of associated park based cultural assets. In order "to deliver a people-centred conservation and tourism mandate for SANParks, all National Parks have effectively embarked on a mission to develop and promote culture-based tourism products. The strategy aims to tap into and support the development of those cultural dimensions that enable more depth of interaction with, and understanding of, local people in and around National Parks, the regions and their unique cultural identities.

## Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site

Mapungubwe and its recent declaration as a World Heritage Site has helped to highlight the significance of cultural heritage within SANParks. The inextricable links between people, biodiversity conservation and cultural heritage have become more evident through Mapungubwe. A number of initiatives have now come up within SANParks to enable a more dedicated focus on cultural heritage and community participation.



The Mapungubwe National Park provides unparalleled opportunities for the development of cultural resources as a sustainable component in the overall park development and management.

As contemporary South Africa increasingly takes interest in, and its inspiration from, the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, there are opportunities for building a national constituency across the country amongst particularly the youth. Significantly, the story of Mapungubwe and its importance in the overall history of the sub-continent has been incorporated into the national schools' curricula. This means that the site itself is increasingly becoming a focus for educational tours, with many primary and secondary schools as well as students from tertiary institutions visiting the park.



The formation of the park at a time when issues of landownership and restitution has come to the fore throughout southern Africa also provides an opportune moment for the park authorities to implement models of outreach to local communities. The park now regularly hosts communities from Botswana and Zimbabwe who, for almost more than 100 years were cut off from ancestral land of which their ancestors once were an integral part. In this way the park is reaching out to a broader Southern-African community – an initiative that, it is hoped, will eventually culminate in the formation of a Transfrontier Conservation Area. Transfrontier Conservation Areas significantly promote regional integration, greater biodiversity, environmental tourism and economic growth.

## Birding in Mapungubwe

Because of its new status, the park is relatively unexplored bird wise and with its proximity to Botswana and Zimbabwe, all sorts of species could turn up.

Along the Limpopo specials for South Africa such as *Meve's (Longtailed) Starling*, *Tropical Boubou* and the reclusive *Pel's Fishing Owl* should be searched for (one of the local farmers reportedly has one nesting in the yard of his house). There is a high density of *Verreaux's (Black) Eagle* in this craggy landscape and other raptors are also prominent.

Particularly enticing is an abundance of cuckoo species in summer with up to eleven different species being found, including the rarer *Common* and *Thickbilled Cuckoos*.

A list of over 400 species for the area is purported and will be posted on this site once available electronically.

An interesting attraction of the park is the occurrence of species typical of the arid western regions of the country (e.g. *Southern Pied Babbler*, *Crimson-breasted Shrike* and *Black-faced (Black-cheeked) Waxbill*) occur alongside

species associated with the moister Lowveld habitat of the Kruger National Park .

At Leokwe Camp *Verreaux's (Black) Eagle* nest on the cliff face above the reception block.

The most prominent bird is probably the *Cinnamon-breasted (Rock) Bunting*, but other species associated with bush and rocky environments are common too. *Blue Waxbill* and *Black-backed Puffback* are also particularly common.

The Limpopo Tree-top Boardwalk and hide is a magnificent facility allowing the visitor into the trees alongside the birds or looking down on those that forage on the ground and lower strata. *Meyer's Parrot*, *White-crested Helmetshrike*, *Meve's (Longtailed) Starling* and some flycatcher species will be seen. Both Tropical and Southern Boubou occur.

Birding from the hide in the riverbed will vary depending on water levels in the river and can be very rewarding. *Pel's Fishing Owl* are around, so hope for some luck. White-fronted Bee-eater breeds in the river banks and are very prominent. *African Fish Eagle* will make their presence known too.

The Confluence is a great place to scan for passing raptors, while several other species will be easy to locate here.

At the Limpopo Forest Tented Camp the environment is very similar in appearance and atmosphere to the Pafuri Picnic Site in Northern Kruger.

And the cacophony of birds calling in the morning suggests it will be as productive.

*Yellow-bellied Greenbul*, *Meve's (Long-tailed) Starlings*, *Black-backed Puffback* and *Tropical Boubou* should be seen, and *Southern Pied Babbler* and *Natal Spurfowl (Francolin)* are very vocal as are *Orange-breasted* and *Grey-headed Bush-shrikes* and *Grey-backed Camaroptera (Bleating Warbler)*.

At night one should hear several species of owl including *Barn*, *African* and *White-faced Scops*, *Verreaux's (Giant) Eagle* and *Pearl-spotted*. *Pel's* are also not infrequently seen in the area.

The Maloutswa Hide is a good place to sit to watch mammals and birds of all descriptions come and go. To get there from the Tented Camp is a short drive, first through riverine woodland, then through arid thornveld, before one passes across a plain of reclaimed and rehabilitating farmland.

This human intervention has created a different habitat type and is rewarding from a birding perspective. *Kori Bustards* are prominent while *Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark* and *Wattled Starling* are nomadic, but may be abundant. *Temminck's Courser* and *Ground Hornbill* may also be seen in this habitat, as will a number of swallows.

*Crimson-breasted Shrike* are resident in the area by the hide's parking area. *Red-billed Buffalo Weaver* and *Meve's (Long-tailed) Starlings* will be among the most evident of species seen from the hide, but anything is possible. Leopard and Bushpig are regular evening visitors.

The Limpopo Floodplain in flood is a paradise for aquatic birds when in flood. *Grey-crowned cranes*, up to 7 stork species and several wader, heron, crane and duck species will be seen in these wet times.

Rarities are always on the cards. It is reported that *Boulder Chat* has been seen and when one looks at the habitat (particularly around Leokwe) and considers the proximity to the Matobos and other known locations, it would appear a distinct possibility.

There are many stands of Lala Palms (although the elephants do hammer them) and *Collared Palm Thrush* has

been recorded.

Other specials that one should look out for include *Great White Pelican, White-backed Night Heron, Bat Hawk, Augur Buz za rd, African Hobby, Dickinson's Kestrel, Green Sandpiper, Three-banded Courser, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Grey-headed Parrot, Senegal Coucal, Pennant-winged Nightjar, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Broad-billed and Racket-tailed Roller, African Golden Oriole, Olive-tree Warbler* and who knows what else.

View Limpopo Birding Route ([www.limpopobirding.com](http://www.limpopobirding.com)) for more birding info on the park and the surrounding area.

## Mammals

Most of the large game species occur in the park. There is a lot of movement of game between the three countries, and game numbers fluctuate.

### Current species include:

Eland (common)

Blue Wildebeest (common)

Waterbuck (common)

Bushbuck (common)

Duiker (common)

Red Hartebeest (rare)

Giraffe (common)

Warthog (common)

Elephant (common)

Lion (rare)

Cheetah (rare)

Wild dog (rare)

Kudu (common)

Zebra (common)

Impala (common)

Klipspringer (common)

Steenbok (common)

Gemsbok (common)

Bush pig (common)

Baboon (common)

White rhino (rare)

Leopard (common)

Hyena, spotted and brown (rare)

Aardvark (common)

There are numerous smaller game species, including badgers, sivets, porcupine, caracal, vervet monkey, and a host of smaller species. The Kongoni Loop (4x4 vehicles only) and Maloutswa Pan hide can be rewarding.

There is a varied reptile fauna. Pythons and Black mambas are common.

Insect and other arthropod life is diverse. From November to March the beautiful Mopane Moth can be seen flying around. The large larvae of these moths are a valuable food source in the northern parts of the country. At least nine scorpion species has been identified in the park.

A number of well preserved fossils, including flowering plants as well as whole-bodied insects, were recovered from the fine-grained mudstones. Other interesting fossil finds are dinosaur footprints and fossilized termite mounds.

## Vegetation

The numerous habitat types have resulted in high species diversity.

There are at least 24 Acacia species and 8 Commiphora species, amongst other. Other vegetation of the area is a typically short fairly dense growth of shrubby Mopane trees, generally associated with a number of other trees and shrubs and a somewhat sparse and tufted grassveld. The riparian fringe of the Limpopo is of prime importance from the point of view of conservation. It is a dense vegetation community with a closed canopy which occurs in the rich alluvial deposits along the river.

The most striking trees in this community fever trees, Ana trees, Leadwoods, Fig trees and acacias. Extensive patches of this vegetation have been cleared for cultivation elsewhere along the length of the Limpopo River. The Limpopo floodplain has allowed some trees to grow to massive sizes. Nyala berries and Ana trees can get particularly big.

There are also some very large baobabs in the park, with one specimen having a circumference of 31m.

## People with disabilities

### Wheelchair Access

An in-depth [accessibility profile](#) for Mapungubwe National Park has been compiled with camp specific ones as well:

- [Leokwe Rest Camp Accessibility Profile](#)
- [Limpopo Tented Camp Accessibility Profile](#)
- [Maloutswa Hide Accessibility Profile](#)

Please see additional information on [Wheelchair Accessibility](#).