

# Getting Started

There are no hard and fast rules for travelling in Africa. Climate, behaviour and customs all vary from the top to the bottom of the continent. A T-shirt and sandals in January in Cape Town? Perfect. A T-shirt and sandals in January in Tripoli? You're looking at verbal abuse and a nasty cold. The following section is only intended to give you general information that might be useful before you set off. For more specific titbits, flip to the Africa Directory on p1098. No matter how prepared you are, however, nothing will quite prepare you for the overwhelming sensory and cultural experience that is a first visit to Africa. But isn't that why you're going?

## WHEN TO GO

The equator cuts Africa in half, which not only means that water goes in opposite directions down the plughole in the north and the south, but the continent experiences huge climatic variation. Watch out for the wet or rainy seasons, which can turn dirt roads into rivers and curtail travel to remote regions. Just as uncomfortable can be the searing hot season in some countries, which can make moving around during the day nigh on impossible.

Late October to February is a great time to visit the Sahara and arid Central Africa (although be prepared for cold nights) and you can also enjoy the warm summer days of southern Africa or beachcomb along the West African coast.

By around January or February, East African wildlife is concentrated around diminishing water sources and is therefore easier to spot. In contrast, the usually arid lands of North Africa spring into life between March and May.

## COSTS & MONEY

Africa can be as cheap or expensive as you want it to be. Travelling around like a maniac is going to cost much more than taking time to explore a small region slowly and in depth.

For climate information about each country, see the relevant country chapters. General climate information is given on p1102.

## WHAT TO TAKE?

We guess you know to take things like a bag, toothbrush and spare underwear. Here are a few more items to consider:

- Cash – you can't go wrong with a wad of US dollars or euros in your pocket (or, better, strapped about your person). Travellers cheques and ATM cards are good too, but not always viable.
- Medicine – general first-aid gear and all sorts of pills and potions (such as antimalarials) are available without prescription, but it's a good idea to have some with you. Mosquito repellent and sunscreen are absolutely essential.
- Memory cards – if you've got a digital camera, bring along a couple of spare memory cards. You'll take more pictures than you think, and it's useful to have a backup in case one gets damaged.
- Photocopies of important documents – photocopy your passport data pages (and those with relevant visas), tickets and travellers cheques, and pack them separately from the originals.
- Water purifier – bottled water is available everywhere, but the plastic bottles are an environmental nightmare.

The actual cost of living (food, transport etc) varies around the continent, and travellers commonly blow big chunks of their budget on car hire (US\$30 to US\$150 per day), internal flights, balloon rides, adrenaline sports, organised safaris or treks (at least \$100 a day in East/southern Africa), and diving or language courses.

Africa is thought of as expensive among some budget travellers, but you can still scrape by for under US\$20 per day. If you'd like a few more comforts (such as an in-room shower), reckon on US\$30, plus a slush fund of, say, \$100 a month for unexpected expenses. Beyond that, the scope for spending money is limited only by your bank account or your credit limit...

For more on money issues, see p1107. The Fast Facts boxes in the country chapters provide more specific country budgets.

## TOP AFRICAN READS

Country-specific books are mentioned under Arts in each of the country chapters, but the following selection should give you a starting point for literature that covers a broader geographical spectrum.

The *Heinemann Book of African Poetry in English*, ed Adewale Maja-Pearce, features poems written by authors continentwide over the last 30 years.

The *Traveller's Literary Companion to Africa*, ed Oona Strathern, is a handy volume of extracts from African works of fiction and biographies of their authors.

*Shadow of the Sun* by Ryszard Kapuscinski and *The Zanzibar Chest* by Aidan Hartley are both searing memoirs of their authors' decades spent as foreign correspondents in Africa. More contemporary issues are dealt with in John Reader's excellent *Africa: A Biography of the Continent*.

*The Tree Where Man Was Born* by Peter Matthiessen, although written in the early '60s, remains for many the definitive African travelogue.

For a more visual experience, get hold of *African Ark* by Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, also a few years old but still one of the most beautiful photographic works on Africa.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

Every savvy traveller knows that the best information comes from fellow travellers, and the World Wide Web is now full of sites where those on the road can upload their own travel experiences for the benefit of others. Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree forum (<http://thorntree.lonelyplanet.com>) is a good place to start, and the following sites are also great for meeting fellow Africa enthusiasts online:

**Bootsnall** ([www.bootsnall.com](http://www.bootsnall.com))

**IgoUgo** ([www.igougo.com](http://www.igougo.com))

**Travellers' Point** ([www.travellerspoint.com](http://www.travellerspoint.com))

**Trip Advisor** ([www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com))

**Virtual Tourist** ([www.virtualtourist.com](http://www.virtualtourist.com))

Some commercial sites also provide reams of good travel information. Have a look at [www.go2africa.com](http://www.go2africa.com) or [www.siyabona.com](http://www.siyabona.com), both tour operators' sites that have some excellent travel articles, or [www.travelafricamag.com](http://www.travelafricamag.com), a British travel magazine that provides a wealth of information (some of it only available to subscribers). The National Geographic site has an Africa Archive section ([www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/africaarchive](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/africaarchive)) with enough articles and photos on it to keep you lost for hours.

Two very useful academic sites that provide links to Africa-related websites are **Penn University** ([www.africa.upenn.edu](http://www.africa.upenn.edu)) and **Stanford** ([www.sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/guide.html](http://www.sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/guide.html)).

If you can't get enough of African literature, check out the website of literary magazine *The African Review of Books* ([www.Africanreviewofbooks.com](http://www.Africanreviewofbooks.com)), which has a top 100 list as well as reams of news, reviews and book gossip.

## CONDUCT

It's hard to generalise about appropriate behaviour for travel in Africa. Certainly, traditional values remain strong and vibrant across the continent, even when they're masked with a veneer of Westernisation: in East Africa, a Maasai *morán* (warrior) may carry a briefcase in town and then pick up a spear once he's home.

By and large Africans are easy-going and polite. Your social gaffes are usually forgiven and are more likely to cause confusion and amusement than offence. At the same time, good manners are respected and many people will think you most rude if you don't say hello and inquire after their health before asking them when the next bus is going to leave. That's why it's useful to learn a few local greetings, although in some African societies these initial exchanges can go on for minutes and you'll inevitably have to switch back to English or French.

Shaking hands is a big deal in most African countries. Men who know each other well will often clasp each others' hands for many minutes, with much enthusiasm. There are more than a few styles of shake: in some places shakers link thumbs in the clasp, others touch their right elbow with the left hand during the shake or touch their hearts with the right hand after releasing the clasp. You'll soon pick it up. Local women don't usually have their hands shaken, but foreign women are sometimes treated as honorary blokes; see p1114 for more general information about female travellers.

Africans operate with a smaller area of personal space than most Westerners, which can feel odd at first. There are few queues in Africa – just scrums – and people showing you the way somewhere will often grab your hand as they go along.

Hospitality towards travellers is common, and only in a few overtouristed areas does it come with a catch, where travellers are occasionally exploited for income or hustled for money by the people they believed to be their friends.

### DO

- Learn to use the local language – a little goes a long way
- Interact with local folks; don't hide in tourist ghettos
- Share your food and drink with local people on long journeys
- Respect local customs and superstitions
- Show photos of family and friends back home to break the ice
- Get off the beaten track; people can be more warm and welcoming
- Tread lightly; leave little lasting evidence of your visit

### DON'T

- Undermine the authority of elders and officials; treat them politely and with respect
- Insult touts and hustlers, no matter what the provocation
- Show too much flesh
- Stumble around drunk
- Camp on or wander across private land; ask permission first
- Use your left hand for eating or passing anything on
- Partake in public displays of affection

**TOP TEN...****Films**

The comedy and tragedy of African life has always attracted filmmakers, with recent years producing an outstanding crop of features and documentaries. For further reviews see each country chapter.

- *Out of Africa* (1985) Evergreen adaptation of a classic novel
- *Lumumba* (2000) Biopic of the doomed Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba
- *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* (2005) Bizet's opera *Carmen* set in a South African township
- *Xala* (1975) The story of a corrupt politician in newly independent Senegal
- *The Constant Gardener* (2005) Thriller set in Kenya starring Ralph Fiennes and Rachel Weisz
- *Adangaman* (2001) Seventeenth-century slave trading among West African tribes
- *Nowhere in Africa* (2001) Oscar-winning German account of a Jewish family's life in Kenya
- *Yesterday* (2004) Tragic story of a South African AIDS victim
- *Tsotsi* (2005) Tale of violence and hope in Johannesburg
- *The Lost Boys of Sudan* (2003) Two Sudanese refugees journey to America

**Novels**

Africa's rich literary scene has yielded some fiction classics, not all of which get the publicity they deserve in the rest of the world.

- *The Famished Road* (Ben Okri) Extraordinary magic realism epic from Nigeria
- *The Book of Secrets* (MJ Vassanji) Interwoven tales in past and present Tanzania
- *Disgrace* (JM Coetzee) Confronting tale of post-apartheid South Africa
- *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe) Classic tragedy by the Nigerian master
- *So Long a Letter* (Mariama Ba) The marital drama of a Senegalese Muslim woman
- *Purple Hibiscus* (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie) A young Nigerian girl comes of age
- *The Cairo Trilogy* (Naguib Mahfouz) Sweeping family drama set in 1940s Egypt
- *The Heart of Redness* (Zakes Mda) Tradition and modernity collide in South Africa's Transkei
- *Nervous Conditions* (Tsitsi Dangarembga) Two girls experience different lives in Zimbabwe
- *Houseboy* (Ferdinand Oyono) Darkly humorous tale of colonialism and sin in Guinea

**Festivals**

If your travel times are flexible, why not plan your trip around one (or more) of Africa's many festivals and cultural events. There's no better way to party with the locals...

- **Panafest** ([www.panafest.org](http://www.panafest.org)) Biennial festival of theatre and culture in Ghana
- **ZIFF** ([www.ziff.or.tz](http://www.ziff.or.tz)) Film and music festival held every July in Zanzibar
- **Festival in the Desert** ([www.festival-au-desert.org](http://www.festival-au-desert.org)) Tuareg culture meets rock music in Mali
- **Lake of Stars** ([www.lakeofstars.com](http://www.lakeofstars.com)) Superstar DJs come to Lake Malawi each September
- **Durbar Festival** – Spectacular traditional parade of horsemen, annually in Kano, Nigeria
- **Dakar Rally** ([www.dakar.com](http://www.dakar.com)) Iconic car rally across the Sahara
- **Fespaco** ([www.fespaco.bf](http://www.fespaco.bf)) Africa's biggest film festival, held every two years in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- **Timkat Ethiopian Epiphany celebration** – Colourful and ceremonial; every January
- **Imilchil Moroccan** – 'Festival of brides'; every September
- **Sauti za Busara** ([www.busaramusic.com](http://www.busaramusic.com)) Swahili and world music festival, every February in Zanzibar

**Dress**

Urban hipsters in Dakar or Nairobi may like their hip-hop gear, but African society is generally conservative in outlook. It's inappropriate to wear immodest and revealing clothes. Being meeting-granny neat will help your cause when applying for visas, crossing borders or otherwise dealing with authorities. On the road, T-shirts and shorts are just about OK in major tourist areas, but revealing tops or bottoms are unacceptable almost everywhere except on tourist-only beaches. Extra care is needed in rural areas and Muslim countries, where women should keep shoulders (and sometimes hair) covered and wear long skirts or loose trousers.

**Giving Gifts**

Be very careful when distributing gifts to locals. Visitors handing out freebies to locals (especially children) can have a detrimental effect on social networks and create communities of people likely to greet travellers with their hands outstretched. You should expect a few requests from locals for you to give them your flashier travel items, clothing or other gifts, but a polite knock-back isn't considered rude. If you want to help the people you meet, donate to a charity or go via community leaders, schools and hospitals. If you're offered a gift, don't feel guilty about accepting it – to refuse may bring shame on the giver.

**Taking Photographs**

Always, always ask permission before taking photos. Many Muslim women feel very strongly about having their photographs taken by strangers. Likewise, some tribal peoples get really hacked off with being constantly photographed. If you're asked for money, negotiate a reasonable fee when asking permission. Don't offer to send photos back unless you're really prepared to do it.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### TOP TO BOTTOM

#### One Year

Begin in **Tunisia** (p213), then head east past **Libya** (p126) to **Egypt** (p82). Hope for smooth sailing across **Lake Nasser** (p119) to **Sudan** (p197), then head into the Ethiopian highlands. From **Ethiopia** (p651) journey down to **Nairobi** (p684).

An alternative for hitchhikers or self-drivers is to go via the west coast, through **Morocco** (p142) and south to **Nouâdhibou** (p426), Mauritania. There's no official public transport for this desert crossing, but there are some hitching opportunities. Reports from overland travellers who've taken the once-impossible west-coast overland route are now coming in. The latest suggest that it's possible to take a 'desert taxi' between Dahkla, Morocco and Nouâdhibou.

If you're less of a purist, you can avoid the long haul from Cairo and concentrate instead on the classic jaunt from Nairobi to Cape Town – passing through the wildlife-sprinkled plains of **Kenya** (p677) and **Tanzania** (p745) and onto the warm and welcoming villages of **Malawi** (p908) and **Zambia** (p1051). From here, it's back into wildlife territory with Botswana's **Okavango Delta** (p848) and Namibia's **Etosha National Park** (p972), before finishing up right at the bottom in the stunning city of **Cape Town** (p993), South Africa. It pays to factor stunning **Mozambique** (p934) into this round trip.

Go large – why not travel from the very top to the very bottom?



### SOUTHERN AFRICA SMORGASBORD

#### Three Months

Start in South Africa's mother city, vibrant **Cape Town** (p993) then head north to take in the endless sand dunes of Namibia in **Namib-Naukluft Park** (p968). Continue north and east along the Caprivi strip to Kasane, the gateway to Botswana's **Chobe National Park** (p856) and its amazing concentration of elephants, then fly to Maun for a few days poling through the swampy maze of the **Okavango Delta** (p848). Back in Kasane, it's a short hop into Zambia's **Livingstone** (p1064), Africa's adrenaline capital and the place to see the spectacular **Victoria Falls** (p1064).

Continue on from Livingstone to Zimbabwe's **Harare** (p1079) for trips to **Mana Pools National Park** (p1086), **Hwange National Park** (p1090) and the ruins of **Great Zimbabwe** (p1087).

From Harare, make your way towards Mozambique's **Nampula** (p947), the jumping-off point for trips to the unforgettable **Ilha de Moçambique** (p947), via Malawi's **Blantyre** (p921) and the white beaches of **Cape Maclear** (p927). Take a trip to the lost-in-time **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p949) then head south via the sleepy towns of **Quelimane** (p947), **Beira** (p946), **Vilankulo** (p945) and **Inhambane** (p944). Next stop is **Maputo** (p939), the only Latin city in Africa, for a fiesta of seafood and caipirinhas, then it's on to **Johannesburg** (p1015), South Africa's hustling, bustling commercial capital. From here you can head to the **Kruger National Park** (p1026) or set off back towards Cape Town via **Durban** (p1007).



This itinerary takes in the best southern Africa has to offer – most places are easily accessible, English is widely spoken and the countries are well set up for overseas visitors.

## EAST AFRICAN EXTRAVANGANZA

Two to Three Months

Fly into Kenya's **Nairobi** (p684) and explore the Central Highlands around **Mount Kenya** (p694) then head east via **Mombasa** (p700) to the palm-fringed beaches, sleepy atmosphere and coral reefs of **Lamu** (p705).

Head south into Tanzania to **Arusha** (p765), the safari capital of the country, from where you can arrange all sorts of activities including 4WD safaris to the **Ngorongoro crater** (p771) or **Serengeti National Park** (p770) and trekking trips up **Mount Kilimanjaro** (p774). Head south to **Dar es Salaam** (p751) and hop offshore to drink in the Swahili history and culture of **Zanzibar** (p757) and neighbouring **Pemba** (p765). From Dar es Salaam head west towards remote, stunning **Lake Tanganyika** (p780) to watch chimpanzees, then make your way across to **Mwanza** (p772) and western **Lake Victoria** (p789). From here you can move up through Rwanda, which is still recovering, but is a great place to see mountain gorillas, or head directly into western Uganda. The **Ssese Islands** (p812) are a good place to chill out, there's fantastic white-water rafting at **Jinja** (p813) and **Murchison Falls National Park** (p817) is a gem.

From Uganda cut back east to explore western and northwest Kenya, perhaps starting with a trip north to remote **Lake Turkana** (p698). Adventurous jaunts to Ethiopia, Eritrea or northern Mozambique are also possible – or head to Lake Malawi for some laid-back beach time.



Many travellers choose to focus on East Africa, but few spend all their time hanging out on safari with lions and zebras.

## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

### FRENCH FOOTSTEPS

Flights into Senegal's **Dakar** (p477) are cheap and its vibrant nightlife, the beautiful colonial architecture in **St-Louis** (p484), the wildlife-watching opportunities of **Parc National du Niokolo-Koba** (p488) and the spectacular birdlife of the **Siné-Saloum Delta** (p488) all make it a good place to start. Most people then head southeast to Guinea.

After checking out some fine beaches, Guinea's pumping music scene and the beauty of walking in the **Fouta Djalon highlands** (p375), it's easy to cut up into Mali by shared taxi. The vast, ornate mud mosque in **Djenné** (p402), the vibrant port at **Mopti** (p403), trekking in the fascinating **Dogon country** (p410) and the legendary desert outpost of **Timbuktu** (p406) are among the highlights to be discovered along the Niger River. Camels and Tuareg nomads are found in **Agadez** (p445), Niger's premier ancient city, while the desert scenery of the **Air Mountains** (p448) and **Ténéré Desert** (p448) leaves powerful memories.

From Niger you have a couple of options: head south through Nigeria to Cameroon or southwest to Burkina Faso and on to Ghana. Ghana's national parks are excellent, but the beaches and colonial coastal forts on the Gulf of Guinea draw the most travellers.



Pack a French phrase book and hone your sign language for a trip through the sights and sounds of West Africa.

## SWAHILI GHOSTS

Begin in Mozambique's capital, **Maputo** (p939). Head north via **Inhambane** (p944) and **Vilankulo** (p945) to **Beira** (p946), where the ruins of the legendary gold-trading port of Sofala lie. Continue north to **Nampula** (p947), then cross to **Ilha do Moçambique** (p947), an important port in the Swahili heyday, with its Arab-influenced stone houses and carved wooden doors. North from here you'll start to hear the lilt of the Swahili language with its mixture of African, Arabic and Portuguese words and sounds.

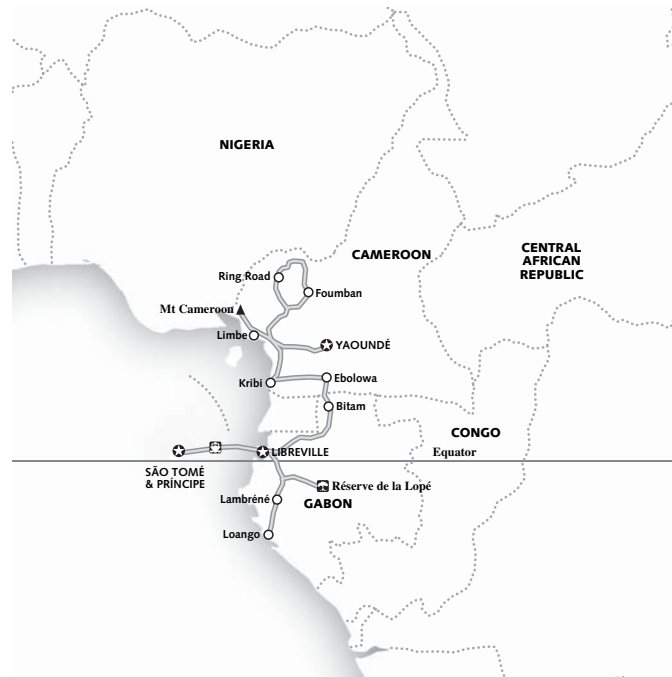
North again to **Pemba** (p949) and the **Quirimbas Archipelago** (p949) for a multiday sailing safari in a traditional Swahili *dhow* (a wooden boat with a huge triangular sail) around these stunning islands. If the wind's in the right direction and the captain's in the right mood, you might even be able to pick up a *dhow* from **Moçimboa da Praia** (p949), in Mozambique's far north, all the way to **Mtwara** (p780) in southern Tanzania. From Mtwara it's a rough bus trip (there are interesting Swahili ruins on the way), or an overnight boat journey to **Dar es Salaam** (p751) and thence to **Zanzibar** (p757). Here the Swahili legacy is most strongly felt in the ancient mosques that sit among the palm trees, the stone bridges that cross the town's narrow streets and the Persian festivals that are still celebrated with music and dancing. If you've got a bit more time, you can carry on right up the East African coast to **Mombasa** (p700) in Kenya, once an Arab stronghold, and on to **Lamu** (p705), a Swahili island so peaceful it seems to be lost in time.

This rarely done trip follows the land and sea routes of the 10th-century Swahili sultans, slavers and merchants who once ruled the East African coast.



## SURFING HIPPOS & NESTING TURTLES

Fly into Cameroon's capital, **Yaoundé** (p280), then head east via lazy beaches around **Limbe** (p288) to explore **Mount Cameroon** (p288) and the **Ring Road** (p291), a circular route through rolling hills and mountains, lakes and waterfalls in the heart of Cameroon's northwestern highlands. Put in some time in Islamic **Foumban** (p292) then head south via the white sandy beaches of **Kribi** (p293) to **Ebolowa** (p294) and onwards across the Gabon border to **Bitam** (p590). Northern Gabon is uncharted territory and ripe for exploring off-off-the-beaten path. Some remaining Pygmy tribes are even rumoured to live in the northern forests. After exploring to your heart's content continue south to uncover the mind-boggling highlights of Gabon's many newly created national parks, which include watching surfing hippos on the beaches at **Loango** (p591) or tracking the vibrant mandrill troupes of **Réserve de la Lopé** (p592). Most of these unique ecotourism opportunities are only accessible by plane from **Libreville** (p584), Gabon's capital, so you may have to base yourself here and shuttle back and forth – it's not cheap, but for the chance to see some of Africa's most pristine natural areas before mass tourism takes hold, it's worth it. Accessible by road is **Lambréné** (p591), the site of Albert Schweizer's famous hospital, which nestles in the heart of an impressive lake network. Finish the trip with a jaunt to one of Africa's smallest countries, **São Tomé & Príncipe** (p598), a land of nesting turtles, perfect tropical beaches and ghostly old plantation houses.



Throw yourself into some of West Africa's most unexplored natural regions with this way-off-the-beaten-track itinerary. Throw in several tribal kingdoms and sultanates, and it's an ecotraveller's paradise.

## TAILORED TRIPS

### BRIGHT LIGHTS, CRAZY CITIES

Sure, many of Africa's cities are dirty, daunting and best rushed through, but if you've got the time and the energy, others are living, pulsing testaments to the continent's cultural diversity. In Senegal's **Dakar** (p477) a feverishly energetic scene boasts some of the best nightclubs, live-music venues and arts festivals in Africa. Ghana's **Accra** (p335) is the birthplace of some of the region's most popular music – jump into your glad rags, hit the club scene and make partying an adventure sport. If you like things a bit more laid back, head to **Maputo** (p939) in Mozambique to drink caipirinhas with the beautiful people, dance the salsa in late-night jazz clubs, feast on gigantic prawns and sip espressos in elegant pavement cafés.

For sheer beauty, it's hard to beat South Africa's **Cape Town** (p993) with an iconic mountain slap-bang in its centre and a necklace of beautiful beaches around its rim. Its multi-ethnic people have come together to create one of Africa's richest cultural scenes. Another must-see

is **Marrakesh** (p178) in Morocco where musicians, merchants, storytellers and the odd lunatic wander through the bewitching hubbub of mind-scrambling medinas and fragrant *souqs*. In Ethiopia's **Addis Ababa** (p656) past and present meet on the city's wide boulevards as priests in medieval-looking robes shuffle past style-queens with mobile phones and the odd herd of goats.

### THE WILDEST SHOWS ON EARTH

If you're the type who spent their childhood glued to the TV watching BBC nature documentaries, it's time to make your wildest dreams come true. In

Tanzania the **Serengeti National Park** (p770) is the venue for the great wildebeest migration, to the delight of the giant crocs that wait for them. If you can make it down to Uganda and have the cash for a trekking permit, you can pay a visit to **Bwindi Impenetrable Forest** (p804) and pick up the trail of the giant, gentle gorillas. Drop down to Botswana and take a sunset river cruise in the **Chobe National Park** (p856) to see hundreds of elephants drinking and romping in the water within metres of your boat.

Cut across to **Madagascar** (p878) and get up early to hear the eerie shriek of the indri (which looks like a giant teddy bear) or watch creamy white sifakas leap sideways across the ground like competitors in a sack race. If you prefer a scuba tank

to a pair of binoculars try **Ras Mohammed** (p102) near Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, where you can dive with thresher sharks and scalloped hammerheads.



### TREKKING TALES

If you like trekking, Africa provides enough trails to wear out many, many pairs of hiking boots. But why use your own feet when you can ride a camel through the Sahara's burning sands towards the blue rocks of the **Air Mountains** (p448) in Niger? Or perhaps you'd prefer ice to fire, undertaking the arduous but rewarding climb to the snowy peak of Tanzania's **Mount Kilimanjaro** (p774) to be rewarded with an unforgettable view of the Serengeti at sunrise? For gentler pleasures wander through the magical milkwood forests of South Africa's **Otter Trail** (p1003), a track that fords rushing rivers on the way to wild and windy beaches.

Some of West Africa's best trekking opportunities are found in Mali's **Dogon Country** (p410), which combines stunning landscapes with the complex and elaborate culture, art forms and unique houses of the friendly Dogon people. In Morocco's **Atlas Mountains** (p185) you can climb steep paths past flat-roofed, earthen Berber villages and irrigated, terraced gardens and walnut groves. Ethiopia's challenging **Simien Mountains** (p666) are simply breathtaking – and not just because of the punishing gradients and high altitude. And finally, if you like your wildlife up close and personal, many of Africa's game reserves and national parks, including South Africa's **Kruger** (p1026), offer walking safaris, where you can find yourself eye-to-eye with a lion or an elephant.

### PUT YOUR FEET UP

Treks, wildlife and urban parties are the stuff that African travels are made of, but they can also be a bit, well...tiring. At some point on your travels you're going to need to hit a hammock, close your eyes and drift away to the sounds of lapping water.

Most East African travellers choose to do their R'n'R in Tanzania's **Zanzibar** (p757), a spicy heaven of perfume plantations, endless white beaches and whispering palm trees. But if you fancy somewhere even quieter, head to Kenya's **Lamu** (p705), where donkeys replace cars and the hardest decision you'll make all day is when to take the next nap. Southern Africa's best-loved beach hangout is the shore of turquoise **Lake Malawi** (p927) with its fresh waters, laid-back locals and reggae bars. Further south, the **Bazaruto** (p945) and **Quirimbas** (p949) islands of Mozambique offer the chance to float for days on a lazy wooden sailing boat. At the other end of the continent the Red Sea resorts of Egypt's **Sinai** (p98) region are a haven for snorkellers and swimmers as well as sunbathers. Out west the little-known country of **São Tomé & Príncipe** (p598) has miles and miles of perfect white sand and blue waters frequented by sea turtles and unknown to tourists. Alternatively, try the grilled seafood and chilled vibe of Cameroon's **Kribi** (p293).



# Snapshot

‘Africa always brings something new.’

*Pliny the Elder*

Long consigned to the ‘boring but important’ section of newspapers and TV programmes, it seems that African issues have enjoyed something of a renaissance in the world media in recent years. Whatever you think about rock stars getting involved in world politics, there’s no doubt that 2005’s Live 8 concerts around the world in support of the Make Poverty History campaign ([www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)) brought issues such as AIDS, trade deficits and child poverty into the spotlight. The attentions of the various celebrities who’ve championed the cause of the continent brought the faces and voices of ordinary Africans into the living rooms of the West.

Despite this, trade with the EU and USA remains skewed against Africa, thanks largely to massive agricultural subsidies in Europe and the USA and the power of global multinationals. Many nations pay the equivalent of their annual health budgets to banks, governments, the IMF and other lenders each year. Lurking in the shadows of lofty ideals about an ‘African renaissance’ is the sad fact that inept governance and the outright theft of land, resources and money by corrupt regimes continues apace across the continent.

Pointless wars remain ‘popular’; as one country manages to raise its game, so another becomes seemingly intent on flushing its immediate future down the toilet. Many more people have died in the recent conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo than during the whole of WWII, but you’ll struggle to get any details about this in the Western media. Natural resources (the cause of many protracted civil wars) continue to be exploited to the detriment of locals and the enrichment of foreign interests and African elites. Western governments and multinational companies may have buckets of blood on their hands, but Africa’s people have also been repeatedly let down by their leaders.

It’s hardly surprising that immigration is on the minds of many, with thousands committing their lives each year to people-traffickers for the promise of a new life in Europe. Some are ‘lucky’ enough to score a low-paid job in Paris or Madrid; others wash up dead on the beaches of southern Europe, the victims of unseaworthy vessels and unscrupulous immigration ‘agents’.

There *is* such a thing as good news from Africa. The continent is home to five out of the 10 fastest-growing economies in the world. There are more female members of parliament in both Rwanda and Tanzania than in the UK. The governments of Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Botswana and South Africa are potential role models for democratic rule. The G8 summit of 2005 pledged to double aid to the world’s poorest countries by 2010, treat all AIDS patients, halve malaria deaths and get every child into school. As long as citizens of non-African countries continue to pressure their governments for real action on these issues there’s no reason the good news stories shouldn’t keep coming.

## FAST FACTS

Population: 910,571,130

Elephant population:  
500,000 (approx)

GDP:  
US\$2,092,300,800,000

Unemployment: 10.5%

Inflation rate: 8.4%

Economic growth: 4.6%

Internet users:

32,765,700

Population over 15 years  
old who can’t read: 40%

## ‘YOU TELL GEORGE BUSH...’

Since September 11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, many travellers in Africa have noticed an increase in local resentment towards US and European governments. These governments are widely perceived as self-serving hypocrites, and this is not just in the Muslim countries where you can still buy Osama bin Laden T-shirts at the market. There’s probably no need to feel personally threatened, though – you’re unlikely to receive anything but courtesy from most individual Africans you meet.



# The Authors



## **GEMMA PITCHER**

### **Coordinating Author**

Gemma Pitcher spent her childhood in Buckinghamshire with her nose buried in books with titles like *Safari Adventure* and *Across the Dark Continent*. These prompted her to disappear to Africa at 17, travelling from Nairobi through six countries to Harare. She returned to the UK for university, then moved back to East Africa to write books about luxury safari camps (it was hard, but someone's gotta do it). She has written for several Lonely Planet titles, including *One People, Madagascar & Comoros* and *South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland*. These days she lives in Sydney, but still dreams of falling asleep to the sound of lions roaring in the distance...



## **DAVID ANDREW**

### **Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, Wildlife**

David has been hooked on Africa since his first visit at age 10. Since then he has travelled extensively on the continent while researching Lonely Planet's *Watching Wildlife* series. His passion for wildlife has led him to study and write about the subject in all corners of the globe. As a biologist he has studied Giant Pandas in southwest China and seabirds in Antarctica, and as an author he has written or co-written all five of Lonely Planet's *Watching Wildlife* series. He was the founding editor of Birds Australia's *Wingspan* magazine and a former editor of *Wildlife Australia*, and has written about wildlife and ecotourism in places as diverse as Madagascar, the Galápagos Islands, Borneo and New Guinea.



## **KATE ARMSTRONG**

### **Lesotho, Swaziland**

Kate was bitten by the African bug when she lived and worked in Mozambique, and on her subsequent travels around East Africa. She jumped at the chance to explore new territory for this Lonely Planet edition. While she successfully avoided malarial mosquitoes, she was less able to escape an obsession with Zulu culture, giraffes and the overwhelming hospitality of the local people (not to mention several flat tyres along the way). When Kate's not eating, hiking and dancing her way around parts of Africa, Europe and South America, her itchy feet are grounded in Sydney where she works as a freelancer, writing travel articles and children's educational books.

## **LONELY PLANET AUTHORS**

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage. They travel widely, to all the popular spots and off the beaten track. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, cafés, bars, galleries, palaces, museums and more – and they take pride in getting all the details right, and telling it how it is. For more, see the authors section on [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).



### JAMES BAINBRIDGE

**Benin, Togo**

West Africa is James' patch. On the three visits he's paid to the region since he was 13, he's dug the dunes, dance floors and dysfunctional minibuses in countries from Morocco to Ghana. Hailing from Shropshire in England, a county where inbreds and eccentrics roam the hedgerows, he's always had a keen eye for the memorable characters Africa throws up. When Lonely Planet dispatched him to Togo and Benin, he was pleased to find the usual stream of fishermen, farmers, hustlers, nomads, kamikaze *taxi-moto* drivers, and a gin-slugging hotelier who instructed him in the art of making a voodoo bomb. His other Lonely Planet credits include *West Africa* and *The Africa Book*.



### TIM BEWER

**Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sudan**

While growing up, Tim didn't travel much except for the obligatory pilgrimage to Disney World and an annual summer week at the lake. He's spent most of his adult life making up for this, and has since visited over 50 countries. After university he worked briefly as a legislative assistant before quitting Capitol life in 1994 to backpack around West Africa. It was during this trip that the idea of becoming a freelance travel writer and photographer was hatched, and he's been at it ever since, returning to Africa several times. He lives in Minneapolis.



### JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET

**Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, Mauritania**

Say 'Africa' to Jean-Bernard and he will instantly have itchy feet. An Africa aficionado for more than 20 years, he has visited 15 nations in western, eastern and southern Africa. For this edition, he was all too happy to travel the breadth and length of eastern Africa, from agreeable Asmara to under-rated Djibouti and to mysterious Somaliland, where he experienced the smug feeling of having the whole country for himself. He also swallowed his fair share of sand in the Mauritanian Sahara. He is currently based in Paris, where he works as a freelance journalist and photographer. He has coauthored Lonely Planet's *Ethiopia & Eritrea* and *West Africa*.



### PAUL CLAMMER

**Cameroon, Nigeria**

Once a molecular biologist, Paul has long since traded his test tubes for a rucksack, and the vicarious life of a travel writer. Overlanding in Africa was his first significant travel experience, and he has returned to the continent many times since. He is fascinated by the interface between Muslim and black Africa (he's also written a book about Sudan), and so particularly relished the chance to explore Nigeria, that most maligned of West African countries.



### MATTHEW D FIRESTONE

**Botswana, Namibia**

Matt is a trained biological anthropologist and epidemiologist who is particularly interested in the health and nutrition of indigenous populations. His first visit to Botswana and Namibia in 2001 brought him deep into the Kalahari, where he performed a field study on the traditional diet of the San. Unfortunately, Matt's promising academic career was postponed due to a severe case of wanderlust, though he has relentlessly travelled to over 50 different countries in search of a cure. Matt is hoping that this book will help ease the pain of other individuals bitten by the travel bug, though he fears that there is a growing epidemic on the horizon.



### MARY FITZPATRICK

**Liberia, Mozambique**

Originally from Washington, DC, Mary set off after graduate studies for several years in Europe. Her fascination with languages and cultures soon led her further south to sub-Saharan Africa, where she has spent much of the past decade living, working and travelling, including almost four years in Mozambique and two years in Liberia and a few of its neighbours. Mary has authored and coauthored numerous other guidebooks covering Mozambique, Liberia and many other destinations on the continent. She calls Cairo home at the moment and travels to points south (preferably those with beaches) whenever she gets the chance.



### MICHAEL GROSBERG

**Ghana, South Africa**

After a childhood spent stateside in the Washington, DC area and a valuable philosophy degree in hand, Michael took a job doing something with developing a resort on an island in the Pacific, after which he left for a long overland trip through Asia. He later found his way to South Africa where he did journalism and NGO work and found time to travel all over southern Africa. He returned to New York for graduate school in comparative literature and he has taught literature and writing in several NYC colleges in addition to Lonely Planet assignments that have taken him around the world.



### ANTHONY HAM

**Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Morocco**

Anthony's first trip for Lonely Planet was to Africa, where he ate rat, was held up at knifepoint and fell irretrievably in love with the region. In the six years since, he has returned often to the region (collecting a formidable array of illnesses en route) to indulge his passions for West African music, Libyan days of Saharan solitude and long, slow trips up the Niger, not to mention visiting old friends. When he's not in North or West Africa, Anthony lives in Madrid from where he writes and photographs for numerous newspapers around the world. For Lonely Planet, he has also written the 1st edition of *Libya* and coordinated the most recent editions of *West Africa* and *Morocco*.



### KATHARINA KANE

**Senegal, The Gambia**

When Katharina heard the haunting sound of a Fula flute during a London concert, her fate was sealed. She headed straight to Guinea in West Africa, where she ended up studying the instrument for a year before writing a PhD on its origins. She then decamped to Senegal, a country that she'd fallen in love with during one of her many travels to West Africa in her role as a music journalist. Katharina has worked on other Lonely Planet titles, writes for various world music magazines and produces radio features on world music for stations including the BBC and WDR. She currently lives in Dakar, or on a plane to yet another new place.



### ROBERT LANDON

**Guinea-Bissau**

Robert has degrees in literature from two different California universities, but his best education continues to be travel, especially year-long stints in Italy, Paris and Rio de Janeiro. His time in Brazil introduced him to the far-flung Portuguese-speaking world and was his gateway to West Africa's Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau – two of the most extraordinary places he's visited.



### NANA LUCKHAM

**Malawi, Zambia**

Born in Tanzania to a Ghanaian mother and an English father, Nana started life crisscrossing Africa by planes and bouncing along the roughest of roads. A rather less glamorous childhood on the south coast of England followed, albeit punctuated with periods living in Ghana and a then-thriving Zimbabwe. After a degree in history and French and a Masters in international relations she headed off, with an impressively small backpack, to explore southern and eastern Africa and beyond, supplementing her travels with periods of gainful employment at UN headquarters in New York. She now lives in the exotic wilds of southwest London but still spends most of her time on the road.



### VESNA MARIC

**Algeria, Tunisia**

Vesna's love for North Africa was awoken in the Algerian Sahara years ago, when she celebrated New Year's Eve at a Touareg music festival. Researching Algeria and Tunisia for this book was a fantastic experience, and Vesna particularly enjoyed going back into the desert, visiting *Star Wars* sites, eating lovely Algerian and Tunisian food (and trying to make her own *brîq*, a deep-fried, thin pastry pocket), and dipping her feet into the Mediterranean sea. Vesna writes articles and short stories, produces radio features and has worked on short films.



### MATT PHILLIPS

**Ethiopia, Niger**

Matt's shared campfires with hungry hyenas in Zimbabwe, crossed the Sahara in a couple of directions, dodged Mauritanian land mines in Mr Harry ('82 Land Rover), slept in more forms of transport than he can remember and wept in joy when an Ethiopian highlander gave birth in his 4WD. No, Matt's African experiences, which cover over 20 nations, never seem to be ordinary or boring. Perhaps that's why he was so enthused about taking on Ethiopia and Niger for this title! Matt's also co-authored Lonely Planet's *Ethiopia & Eritrea*, *West Africa* and *Kenya* guidebooks, as well as coordinated Lonely Planet's behemoth colourful bible on the continent, *The Africa Book*.



### NICK RAY

**Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda**

A Londoner of sorts, Nick comes from Watford, the sort of town that makes you want to travel. Nick has travelled through many countries in Africa over the years, including the southern stunner that is Mozambique and the northern mystique of Morocco, but it is Uganda and Rwanda that he finds to be small but perfectly formed. He relished the chance to return for another round of towering volcanoes, plentiful primates and blessed beers from Kampala to Kigali. He also managed a hit and run on Burundi, a fascinating country emerging from its tortured past. Nick currently lives in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and has worked on more than 20 titles for Lonely Planet.



### BRENDAN SAINSBURY

**Angola, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo**  
Brendan is an expat Brit and one-time travel guide who woke up one morning to find himself living in Vancouver married to one of his former clients. He first discovered Africa in the 1990s, when he embarked upon a cross-continental hitchhiking odyssey that began in Cape Town and ended in Dar es Salaam. Inspired by tales of derring-do on Africa's last frontier, he returned to the 'dark continent' in 2001 to work at a teacher's training college in rural Angola. Extracurricular tasks included building latrines, refurbishing a library ransacked by Unita guerrillas, and staging a Portuguese version of Shakespeare's 'Comedy of Errors' in the middle of the bush.



### JENNY WALKER

**Egypt**

Jenny Walker's first involvement with Egypt was as a teenager trying to fend off the advances of balcony-climbing locals. Certain there must be more to Egypt than testosterone, she studied the country (and wider region) in a dissertation on Doughty and Lawrence (BA, University of Stirling) and in a thesis entitled *The Perception of the Arabic Orient, 1780–1820* (MPhil, University of Oxford). She has written extensively on the Middle East for Lonely Planet and, with her husband, coauthored *Off-Road in the Sultanate of Oman*, where she lives. Although deeply attached to the Arab world, she has travelled extensively in 86 countries from Morocco to Tanzania, and from Panama to Mongolia, engaged in diverse assignments.



### TONY WHEELER

#### Central African Republic

Tony and Maureen Wheeler's Asia overland trip in 1972 led to *Across Asia on the Cheap*, the very first Lonely Planet guidebook. Their Africa travels have ranged from camping safaris in East Africa with their young children to a recent aerial trek up the western side of the continent that included a visit to the Central African Republic. Their latest African adventure was the Plymouth–Banjul Challenge, where they nursed an old car from England to Gambia.



### VANESSA WRUBLE

#### Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé & Príncipe

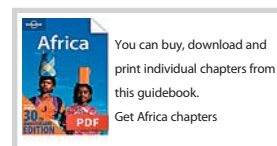
Currently pursuing an advanced degree in psychology, for most of her adult life Vanessa has been a freelance writer, humanitarian aid worker, TV correspondent/producer, documentary filmmaker, interactive artist, renegade street event organiser, and, of course, a traveller. She is currently at work on a book based on her blog from Sierra Leone ([www.vanessawithoutborders.com](http://www.vanessawithoutborders.com)), tentatively entitled *A Hipster's Guide to Freetown*. If she ever finishes, Vanessa intends to embark on an album, write and direct a movie, and learn the 30 languages she's been dying to become fluent in, but only after traveling to every country in the universe.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

**Harriet Martin** wrote the Zimbabwe chapter. Born in Tanzania to Australian parents, Harriet lived in southern Africa until she was 12. She then studied in Sydney, but the travel bug was never far from the surface. She backpacked and worked in South and Central America, the Middle East, India and West Africa, before returning 'home' to sub-Saharan Africa.

**Jane Cornwell** is an Australian-born, UK-based journalist, author and broadcaster, who wrote the Music in West Africa chapter. After graduating with a Masters degree in anthropology, she left for London where she worked, variously, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and for Peter Gabriel's Real World company. She currently writes about arts, books and music – most notably world music – for a range of UK and antipodean publications, including the *Times*, *Evening Standard* and *Telegraph* newspapers, *Songlines* magazine and the *Australian* newspaper. She travels about the planet regularly, interviewing world musicians.

**Dr Caroline Evans** wrote the Health chapter. Caroline studied medicine at the University of London, and completed General Practice training in Cambridge. She is the medical adviser to Nomad Travel Clinic, a private travel health clinic in London, and is also a GP specialising in travel medicine. She has been an expedition doctor for Raleigh International and Coral Cay expeditions.



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