

## THE PANHANDLE

North and west of the Delta, in an area known as the 'panhandle', stand several old, established camps. These are often viewed as fishing camps, as the tiger-fishing here is particularly good, but the birdwatching is also first class, with rarities like skimmers, as well as a host of egrets, storks, kingfishers and warblers all present. Big game is very scarce, but these camps do offer a great-value Okavango experience, and can be included into self-drive trips which focus mainly on Namibia.

**Nxamaseri Island Lodge** (see also page 60) has six en-suite brick-and-thatch chalets and three 'tree-houses' on its own very tropical island. This stands on the edge of a classic, shallow-water Okavango Delta environment – perfect for boat trips, fishing, birding and sometimes mokoro excursions. Booked in advance, full-day trips to explore the Kalahari's Tsodilo Hills are possible at extra cost.

A little further north, **Drotsky's Cabins** is a long-established lodge beside the Okavango River, with comfortable bungalows and its own special atmosphere.



Exploring the rock art at Tsodilo Hills

## MAUN

Maun is a dusty, sprawling outpost, where the centre's neat shopping precincts are scarcely a stone's throw from a hodgepodge of shacks and rondavels where donkeys and goats roam. It's the hub of the country's efficient tourism industry and the main gateway to Botswana's best wildlife areas, including the Okavango, yet most visitors don't stay here. Venture out of the airport en route to your safari and there are small shops and a café across the road catering to international visitors. For a longer break in your journey, there are several local options.

The luxurious **Royal Tree Lodge** is situated on a small, private game farm on the outskirts of town. Here, seven smart tents on wooden platforms have small decks, en-suite bathrooms with a stand-alone bath, and open-air showers. There are also two air-conditioned honeymoon chalets and a villa that sleeps up to six people with its own private garden and plunge pool. The surrounding bush is home to a variety of antelope, giraffe, zebra and countless birds. It's a lovely spot to relax by the pool or



The Panhandle is great for boat trips and fishing

stretch your legs on one of the marked walking trails – which you can follow without a guide.

A short transfer north of Maun is the simple and very comfortable **Thamalakane River Lodge** which overlooks a river of the same name. Each of the 18 stone-and-thatch chalets has tiled floors, ceiling fans and verandas. Also overlooking this river, **Crocodile Camp** is one of Maun's oldest establishments and a popular choice for self-drivers and groups. For something a little closer to Maun's heart, **Marina's Camp** offers accommodation in simple chalets.

## KASANE

In Botswana's northeast corner, beside Chobe National Park, lies the small town of Kasane. Although of limited interest to the visitor, the town is only a short transfer to/from Victoria Falls and makes a useful staging post for safaris. Over the years, Kasane has become increasingly popular and busy. We mention it here because it has several relatively economical lodges, and is within reach of the very relaxed wildlife found along the northern Chobe Riverfront.

Two lodges in the town of Kasane are worth considering, perhaps as an introduction before a more remote safari: the large and well-priced **Chobe Safari Lodge**, and the welcoming, owner-run **Garden Lodge**. Both offer accommodation on a half-board or full-board basis, including activities, also making them a good option for travellers on a budget or those passing through on a self-drive safari from Namibia's Caprivi Strip.

### Hills and Caves in the Kalahari

For adventurers, the magical **Tsodilo Hills** is an intriguing place which rises out of the undulating Kalahari. This is one of Africa's greatest sites for Bushman rock art; Laurens van der Post famously described them as a 'Louvre in the desert'. Even more isolated, **Drotsky's Caves** (in the Gowihaba Hills) and the **Aha Hills** are also fascinating spots in the Kalahari which are possible destinations for private mobile safaris; they cannot easily be visited on a fly-in safari.