

National Museum & Art Gallery

Gaborone houses the National Museum and Art Gallery, which displays a collection of traditional crafts and paintings by local and regional artists. It is located in the center of Gaborone at the intersection of Independence and Queens roads. Opened in 1968 the Botswana National Museum aims at creating in Botswana and everyone an interest in Botswana's diverse cultural heritage. Located at the heart of Gaborone City, it is a delightful compound of museum and gallery, which preserves and recounts the traces and memory of the lives of Botswana.

Charged with the enormous task of promoting Botswana's cultural and natural heritage for appreciation and sustainable utilisation, the museum has 7, very different but connected divisions, which come together to form a cohesive whole responsible for collecting, researching, conserving, exhibiting and educating the public about Botswana.

As the custodian of crucial cultural and natural heritage the Botswana National Museum has to be instrumental in pushing cultural and natural issues to the fore and through such efforts Botswana ratified the 1972 UNESCO Convention on the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage. This saw Botswana drawing up a tentative list of possible World Heritage Sites and nominating Tsodilo for enlisting as a possible first World Heritage Site for Botswana.

{mosimage1}Other sites, which may in future be nominated, include the exotic Gcwihaba Caverns, the majestic prehistoric settlement of Toutswe Mogala located on a flat topped hill, and Botswana's pride and joy, the Okavango Delta.

In a year the two galleries, Octagon and Main, host about 18 exhibitions, some of which like Artists in Botswana, Children's Art Competition and Thapong International are annual events. Most of these exhibitions are aimed at exposing and promoting local artists and they are an opportunity for these artists to market their work and show off their talents. By working very closely with other art groups countrywide and across the border the Botswana National Museum brings together many experienced and professional artists and every year local artists, experienced and inexperienced are granted a chance to work with and learn from artists from outside and in so doing get a chance to make improvements and adjustments to their work.

There is a curio shop within the Museum, Bobi Arts, which is worth a visit. In the Museum grounds a beautifully decorated traditional hut has been built and positioned around the grounds are a variety of transport methods from the past. These include ox wagons, old vehicles and a sledge. Sledges were used to move heavy goods and were replaced firstly by the ox wagon, then by the donkey cart and now the more modern version of a sledge is the "bakkie" (a pick-up truck). The National Art Gallery has been identified as one of southern Africa's top three outstanding galleries and in this respect draws faraway artists who wish to exhibit their artwork in this purpose-built gallery with a spacious ground floor, steps and a ramp. Opposite the Main Gallery is an eight-walled building called the Octagon Gallery. It is normally used for in-house displays but can be available for smaller shows. The Botswana National Museum has a permanent collection, which stretches as far back as 1967. The Museum is the home of some original paintings by Thomas Baines.

From: Department of Tourism of Botswana