



Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area

Too vast to describe with any accuracy, the sheer scope of this park bewilders the mind with a range of experiences, from 'the smoke that thunders' at Victoria Falls, to the 'great river' Zambezi. Thundering waterfalls, running through wide stretches of savanna and marsh, rustling forest and woodland, and finally sluggishly ambling a thousand changing paths through the majestic Okavango Delta – these moments and more are available to the explorer of Kavango-Zambezi.

Countries	Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Area	520,000km²
Status	Category B: MOU Signed

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

This expansive park is the world's largest transfrontier conservation area at approximately 520,000 km², a size rivaling that of France. Occupying the Okavango and Zambezi river basins, it encompasses areas within the borders of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and includes 36 formally proclaimed national parks and a host of game reserves, forest reserves, game management areas, and conservation and tourism concession areas designated for use of natural resources – in total, 11 categories of conservation area participate in the TFCA. Most well-known of the component parks are the Bwabwata National Park complex in the Caprivi Strip, Chobe National Park, the Okavango Delta (the largest Ramsar Site in the world) and the Victoria Falls (World Heritage Site and one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the world).

Here, these countries have created an opportunity to harmonize regional legislation towards landscape approaches to conservation and the ecological sciences. The area also provides immeasurable eco-system services to the entire region.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The park was declared in 2006, through the signing of an MOU between the five participating countries, followed by the signing of a treaty in 2011, through which the park was formally and legally established.

Cultural history in the area dates back to more than 80,000 years ago. More recent evidence documents the migration of "Abantu" settlers into the area around 1750, where they encountered small family groups of Khoi-Khoi and Bushman; groups of !Khūng and Khoé Bushmen are still found in the area as hunter gatherers.

3. NATURAL HERITAGE

The park encompasses savanna, grassland, dry, and moist woodland biomes, combined to contribute to rich ecosystem diversity. The scope of the park makes it difficult to provide a full account of the range of features across the landscapes; a few highlights have been provided here. Lying almost at the bottom of a vast sand pit formally known as the Kalahari Basin, the Caprivi area is generally water and nutrient-poor, although some areas of alluvial clay along rivers and watercourse improve fertility. Chobe and surrounding areas are transected by the continuous sedimentary sequence of rocks known as the Kalahari Copper



belt, deformed by metavolcanics and metasediments, with a flat or gently undulating topography. In contrast, the Victoria Falls region is a fluvial landscape, occupying a wet region, and supporting high velocity flow rates through its rivers and streams.

The sheer scope of this park provides both range and opportunity for species diversity. There are four key structural vegetation types within the park including grassland, wetland, dry forest and a variety of woodland types covering the greatest portion of the area, as well as salt pans and scrublands.

There are more than 3,000 plant species throughout the park, of which 100 are endemic to the sub-region.

The area caters to large-scale migrations of mega fauna, including several Red Data List species, of global biological importance; the park contributes to the conservation of threatened species such as African wild dog, wattled crane, Nile crocodile and cheetah. Other mammalian species include buffalo, hippopotamus, lion, lechwe, roan, sable, eland, zebra, wildebeest, waterbuck, puku,



bushbuck, sitatunga, wild dog, spotted hyena and are still naturally regulated in many areas. The park is also home to the largest contiguous population of African elephant (approx. 250,000). Over 600 bird species have been identified, as well as 128 reptile species, 50 amphibian species and diverse invertebrate species.

4. PARKS AND COMMUNITIES

The TFCA is home to approximately two million people with predominant livelihoods being pastoralism, hunting, fishing, natural resource harvesting, growing of crops and employment within the expansive tourism sector in the region.

A unique feature of the TFCA is that local communities were not required to re-settle outside the boundaries of the park, but remained encompassed within the park, with the aim of improving the socio-economic conditions through routing of development, tourism and conservation projects to their benefit. Communities are engaged as partners within the TFCA through comprehensive participatory planning processes. This has begun to result in conservation becoming a more locally viable land-use option.

5. TFCA MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

A system of rotational tenure is used to distribute the role of the coordinating country.

To harmonize existing policies and legal frameworks, the appointed project managers identified a number of disparities among the constituent conservation areas. Negotiations are underway, with a special focus on:

- Natural resource management, especially as regards wildlife corridors, shared watercourses, and applied management strategies and practices impacting on economic and ecological decisions;
- Tourism, with a focus on developing economic linkages between countries, facilitating commitments to responsible tourism, and the harmonization of park fees at single entry points; and
- Legislation, specifically through the recognition of the TFCA in national legislation and relevant policy documents.

6. MAIN CHALLENGES

Climate change is having an escalating effect on multiple areas within the park. The persistence of drought resulting in famine and rapid spread of disease places increasing pressure on natural resources, and sometimes results in escalating human-wildlife conflict. This is underpinned by increasingly erratic and unpredictable rainfall in the region, and brings with it a host of compounded impacts on both people and ecosystems. Mitigation strategies currently being implemented include land-use planning, fire mitigation, and alternative water resource harvesting and access mechanisms.

Proposed strategies include the development of more coherent catchment management systems, as well as working with local communities to integrate adaptation and mitigation strategies responding to a range of implicit and explicit threats related to climate change.

Poaching, of elephant and rhino particularly, is an ongoing challenge. In stark contrast, over-population of mega herbivores is placing increasing pressure on vegetation and grazing resources. While expanded available range for these animals has reduced some over-population challenges, coordinated efforts to mitigate poaching and manage large game distribution more effectively remain a priority.

Other human-wildlife conflicts include overlapping land-use practices and competition for natural resources.



7. TOURISM INITIATIVES

The KAZA TFCA abounds with tourist sites and attractions, including the Okavango Delta, Victoria Falls, the unexplored Angolan woodlands and the Caprivi Strip. Current tourism infrastructure (including hotels, lodges, airports etc.) and the untapped potential to further develop infrastructure offer a window of opportunity for transforming the TFCA into a premier tourist destination, thereby strengthening its already considerable economic value.

A range of tourism offerings is available, from budget to luxury accommodation and tours, a wide collection of cultural and heritage tourism experiences, and growing numbers of adventure tourism opportunities. Cultural tourism in particular is a growing market in the park, providing both a means to create alternative livelihood strategies, and to celebrate the rich cultural diversity within the area through the sharing of traditional knowledge and practices.

8. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The construction of an Integrated Development Plan is currently underway, with various joint projects aimed at improving natural resource management, land-use planning, tourism, infrastructure and alternative livelihood development, being investigated and informing the plan; a first step is the development of five separate IDPs to inform a master plan, and it will be the job of the TFCA to promote the fair and equitable distribution of benefits from the plan. A project team has been appointed to undertake the task of consolidating the separate plans into a master plan for the park.

A small example of the benefits of the master IDP is the identification of a number of wildlife corridors, with conservation strategies to manage specific species such as wild dog.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

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