



DISCOVER

MALAWI

Discover

The Warm Heart of Africa



Welcome to Malawi! Described as the 'Warm Heart Of Africa', this relatively little known gem of this diverse continent has so much to offer; **wildlife, culture, adventure, scenery, and of course the third largest lake in Africa.** A year-round destination, some would even go as far to describe Malawi as the most attractive country in sub-Saharan Africa!

'Most attractive' may seem to be an extravagant claim for such a small country but the truth lies in the unique combination of attractions that Malawi has to offer. Where else will you find such a genuinely warm welcome in a country at peace with itself? Where else can you experience such a diverse scenic kaleidoscope in such a small area? Here you have central Africa's highest mountain, vast high plateaux with seemingly limitless views, forests and unspoilt **Big 5 game parks** and, the jewel in the crown, Africa's third largest and most beautiful lake – truly an inland sea.

The friendliness of the Malawians is renowned and this makes the cultural experiences second to none. Add to that the beautiful and varied scenery, thrilling safaris and beach-fringed crystal clear waters of Lake Malawi and you have all that Africa has to offer in one, very compact, destination. Yet, remarkably, Malawi remains untouched and unspoilt by mass tourism. This is still real Africa where you will hardly see another visitor, and it is safe and easy to explore.



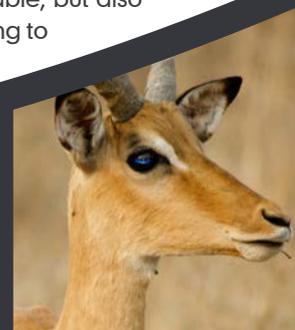
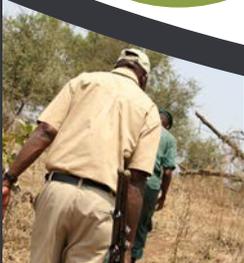
For decades now, Malawi has been known as the **Warm Heart of Africa**. Try as one might to think of a new title, it has to be admitted that these four words so fittingly sum up all that is the visitor's impression of the country there seems little point in seeking change. Malawi welcomes its visitors from

overseas with a genuine warmth that is truly unforgettable; whether they be first time visitors to Africa or old Africa hands.

As well as the warmth of the welcome and the unrivalled cultural experiences interacting with real people in real villages, there is a whole host of activities to choose from: safaris by 4x4, by boat, or on foot; sailing, kayaking, snorkelling, scuba diving, water-skiing and much more on the Lake; trekking, climbing, mountain biking and walking in the highlands and forests; or just relaxing on a golden sand beach or watching wildlife at a waterhole. Malawi is exceptionally **family-friendly** and there's so much available to keep everyone interested. It also benefits from a lovely climate of largely warm, sunny days. If ever too hot, there will always be a highland area offering a cooler escape, and those highlands are the only places it could ever be described as 'cold'

"Malawi is simply waiting to be discovered!"

Malawi's tourism has witnessed unprecedented development in recent years. New lodges have opened and some existing hotels and lodges have been enlarged and upgraded. The tourist infrastructure remains small scale but what's there is of a high standard. The country's reserves have been developed through conservation and restocking, and investment has been put into infrastructure such as roads, domestic transfers, and lake transport, making Malawi not just stunning, rewarding, and memorable, but also easy and safe. Malawi is simply waiting to be discovered!



Wildlife

Malawi's nine national parks and wildlife reserves offer game viewing and tracking as it should be... intimate, exclusive and abundant. Each park has a maximum of just two lodges, so you can view the Big 5 without the crowds.

The Parks and Reserves cover a great variety of landscape and vegetation types, and include areas of genuine unspoilt wilderness. In the north are the unique and beautiful highlands of the **Nyika Plateau National Park**, and the low lying **Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve**. Central Malawi has two vast game areas: **Kasungu National Park** in the west and **Nkhotakota Reserve** in the east. The latter, straddling the rugged and untouched wilderness of the Rift Valley Escarpment, has only recently been developed to accept visitors, but with that comes a sense of real wilderness. In the south is **Liwonde**, the most established National Park in the country, offering the most prolific game viewing along the River Shire. There are also three game areas further south in the Lower Shire Valley: **Lengwe National Park** and the wildlife reserves of **Majete** and **Mwabvi**. Majete is a remarkable conservation success story, having been successfully restocked into a thriving Big 5 reserve. Near the southern end of Lake Malawi is the world's first freshwater national park at **Cape Maclear**. This is one of Malawi's UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

A safari in Malawi is about memorable experiences, not just tick lists; plenty of game in beautiful surroundings but no convoys of vehicles characteristic of some African game parks. Visitors are relatively few in number, giving everyone the opportunity to experience all types of safari: in a 4x4, by boat, or on foot, and even wildlife viewing from your balcony, in peaceful privacy.

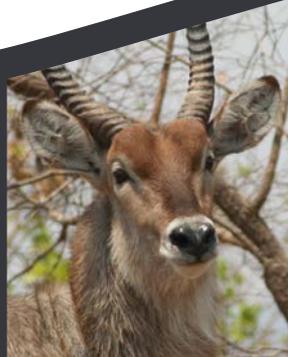
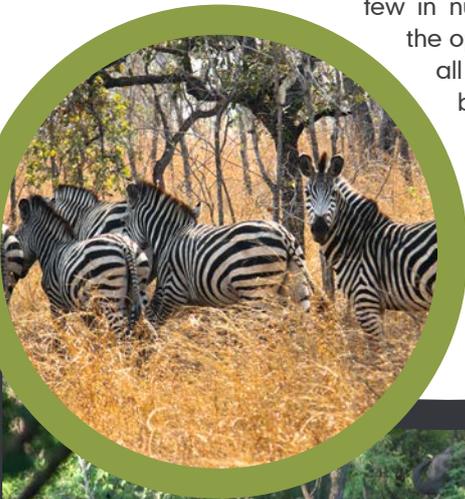
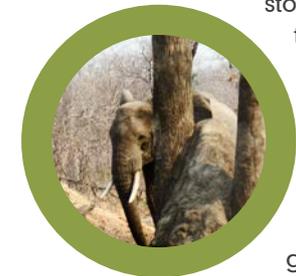


The Big Five

Malawi is home to the Big 5 (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhino) as well as a splendid range of antelope and the smaller cats such as caracal and serval. Hippos are to be found in large numbers, so much so that they are almost symbolic of Malawi's wildlife.

Malawi is also an **ornithologist's paradise**. Few countries in the whole of Africa can rival Malawi's range of bird species, coupled with the relative ease of **birdwatching**. Around 650 species have been identified with over ten per cent not being seen in other parts of southern Africa.

Best known is the **fish eagle** to be seen at the Lake and along the River Shire. But the greatest variety of animal species is to be found under water, with Lake Malawi a real life aquarium that is home to around 1000 species of tropical fish – a number unsurpassed anywhere else in the world.



Lake

The jewel in the crown of the country's tourist attractions is Lake Malawi – the Rift Valley's 'Lake of Stars'. Home to the world's first freshwater National Park and covering a third of the country, Lake Malawi is the third largest lake in Africa. Although a lake of crystal clear fresh water, its size and depth gives it a sea-like appearance, with one side rarely visible from the other, and a shoreline of idyllic golden sandy beaches lapped by gentle waves. The Lake is a real-life aquarium, home to some 1000 species of brightly coloured tropical fish, many unique to the Lake. That's more species than all the lakes and rivers of Europe and North America put together! Far from hiding away, these fish will swim around you, come up close, and boast their magnificence right in front of your eyes.

This vast body of freshwater is not only a scenic wonderland but it provides a wide range of water sport opportunities for those looking for something beyond sun, sand and swimming. International-class accommodation is dotted along its length, mainly small friendly lodges, but to suit all budgets and interests. From luxury lodges and yacht charters to rustic camps on deserted islands, all have their own piece of paradise and offer plenty of activities to keep you occupied. Equally, they all offer a truly relaxing beach experience, often in complete seclusion.

Lake Malawi was "discovered" by the Scottish missionary and explorer Dr David Livingstone just over 150 years ago and it now forms an integral part of Malawi's cultural heritage, bringing sustenance, livelihood, tourism and leisure to the country. Fishing villages are scattered along the shore and the traditional industry and practices are an attraction to visitors. Lake Malawi's approximate dimensions are 365 miles north to south and 52 miles broad, hence the nickname: "the calendar lake".

The Lake, in the north, is quite extraordinarily deep at 2300 ft/700 m, plunging

What to do

Along with swimming, a wide variety of watersports is offered at Lake Malawi's lodges, including snorkeling, windsurfing, kiteboarding, paddleboarding, kayaking, and sailing. Some also offer more specialised activities at additional cost, such as water-skiing and scuba diving (there are a number of PADI dive resorts where beginners can learn to dive). Sunbathing/relaxing is always an option, with beaches never over crowded. Out of the water the shoreline and islands can be explored on foot or by bike, with birdlife and small animals often to be seen, or a fishing village to be visited.

well below sea level. This reflects the enormity of the natural faulting of the Great Rift Valley, which is the origin of the Lake.

Access to the Lake is possible along much of its length but it should be noted that it is usually necessary to take a short detour off the main roads in order to reach the beach (part of the magic!). There are long stretches of totally uninhabited golden sand lakeshore, lapped by crystal clear waters. Journeys on the Lake range from the famous 'lake ferry', the *mv Ilala*, to sailing in an ocean-going yacht or exploring on a kayak expedition.





Landscape



Malawi's natural scenery is stunningly beautiful. The diversity of landscapes is breathtaking and changes around every bend in the road: untouched wilderness, high plateaux, mountain peaks, riverine lowlands, vast tracts of forest, grasslands, and plantations of sugar and tea. All of this in a country smaller than England.

The highest peaks in Malawi touch **10 000 ft/3000 m** while the lowlands are barely above sea level. These great contrasts help to make the landscape of Malawi one of the most varied in Africa. The scenery, including its cloak of vegetation, presents an ever-changing vista that transforms through the seasons.

The Lake, its immediate shoreline and the valley of the **Shire River** which drains it, lie within the Great Rift Valley of eastern Africa. From the Lake, a series of escarpments climb to the **Central African Plateau** (1600 - 5000 ft / 500 - 1500 m). This is gently undulating land, punctuated by occasional hills and forests. Rising to even greater heights are Malawi's

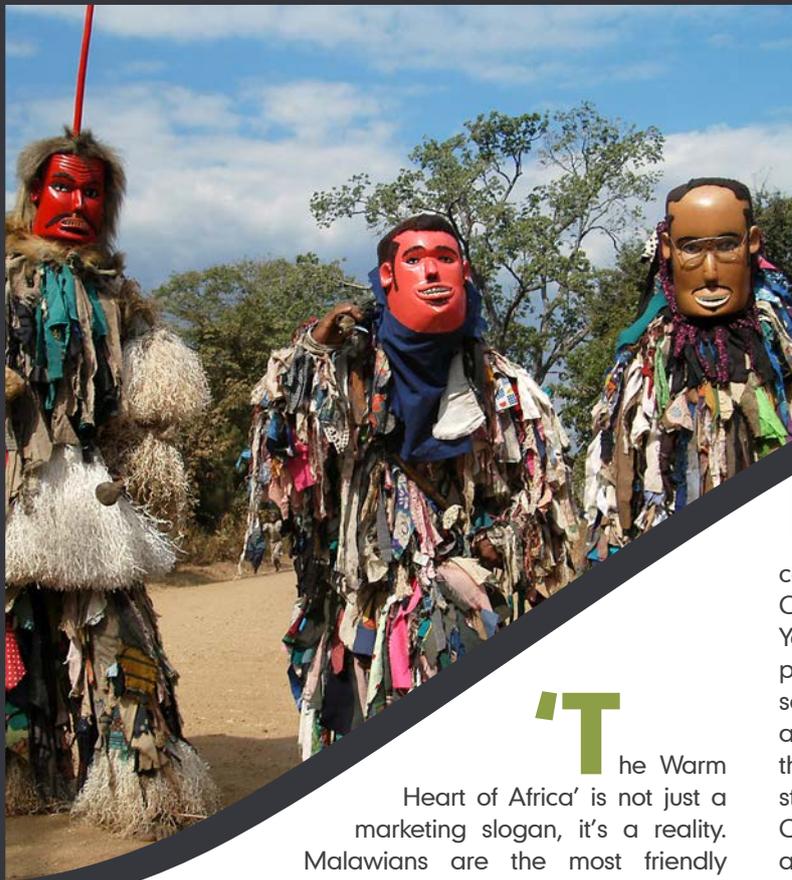
Mount Mulanje

(Pictured bottom left)

Towering to **10 000 ft (3000 m)** Mount Mulanje is certainly one stop to make if you are exploring the southern area of Malawi. Central Africa's highest peak, it lies to the east of Blantyre and is easily accessible. Visitors can drive round the foot of the massif in a day but even more attractive is to trek and camp on the mountains. There are choices between quite gentle walking and serious climbing. Arrangement can be made to hire camping equipment and the services of guides. Certainly worth it if you're up for a challenge!

true mountains: the whaleback plateau of **Nyika** and the mountainous **Viphya** in the north, the **Dowa Highlands** in the centre and, in the south, the two great massifs of Zomba and, highest of all, **Mulanje**, Central Africa's grandest peak. Clothed in forests and broken by streams and waterfalls, these highlands provide a landscape not expected of Africa. As well as viewing points from which to see across countless miles of varied and magnificent landscapes, the forest reserves and uplands offer activities from climbing to trekking, mountain biking to birdwatching, or simple cool tranquillity in surroundings of incredible natural beauty.





Culture

'The Warm Heart of Africa' is not just a marketing slogan, it's a reality. Malawians are the most friendly people you could meet anywhere in the world. A warm, **welcoming and safe nation**, locals love to share their communities with visitors; and cultural experiences here are genuine and true to life.

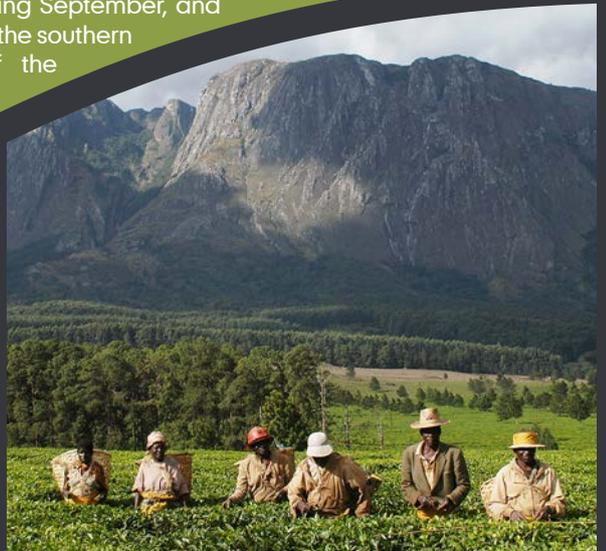
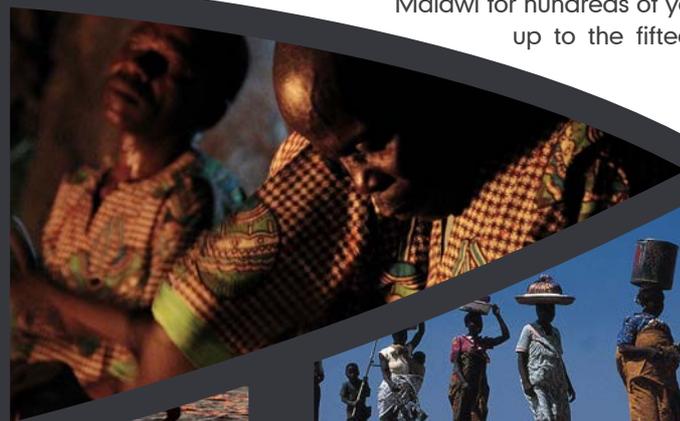
Even in the context of Malawi's great natural riches and attractions, its people are its greatest asset: friendly and welcoming to a fault. Every visitor is met with a smile and the warmth of the welcome is genuine and long-lasting. With a population of a little more than 14 million, Malawi is one of the more densely peopled countries of this part of Africa. Most people live in traditional rural villages. But these villages give visitors a wonderful opportunity to have a glimpse of **real Africa** – daily life as it is today in the heart of the continent. These are not tourist creations, but real people in real villages going about their lives. They are pleased to welcome in respectful visitors and proud to show them round. The majority of Malawi's tourist lodges across the country have strong links to their local communities and can easily arrange village visits.

Many of today's Malawians are descendants of the Bantu people who moved across Africa and into Malawi for hundreds of years up to the fifteenth

century. There is now a **rich cultural mix** in Malawi with the Chewa being the most numerous tribe. Others include the Yao, the Nyanja and the Maravi. In the north the Tumbuka are prominent. Each tribe has contributed to the modern Malawi scene, whether it be in dress or dance or language. Masks are commonly used in various dances and ceremonies and these are usually tribe-specific. Traditional (African) doctors still attract many people and the two main 'modern' religions, Christianity and Islam, frequently exhibit a continuing adherence to traditional beliefs.

Although a Malawi **cultural experience** is generally about interacting with local people, one or two places around the country offer some specific cultural highlights. The Chongoni hills near **Dedza** have wonderful caves containing stone-age rock art and are another of **Malawi's World Heritage Sites**. Dedza itself is home to the famous Dedza Pottery, which is a centre of crafting excellence, as is Mua Mission, whose amazing wood carvings are exported around the world. Mua is also home to a wonderful cultural museum. For the most modern cultural experience there are burgeoning music scenes in the cities of Lilongwe and Blantyre.

Music & Festivals
Malawi's festival and music scene is fast expanding, with events throughout the year and with some Malawian artists gaining international recognition. Events vary from choir festivals to seasons of dance. When it comes to a must, the event that is already on the world map is the Lake of Stars Festival. This high profile event celebrates music from around the world, with artists travelling from every continent! The festival normally takes place during September, and is held on the southern shores of the lake.



Adventure & Activity

A holiday in Malawi is not about staying in one place – it's about touring, seeing new places and enjoying new experiences. Visitors should think in terms of a stay in the country of 10-14 days. A longer period will allow for a more leisurely tour but if you can't spare more than a week it's best to focus on one region. The beauty of Malawi's compact size and great variety is that no time is ever 'lost' to travel. Each destination is likely to be only a few hours from the next, and with a fascinating amount to see on the way. Throughout the country there is a remarkable array of activities on offer - on land and on (and in) water.

Watersports

Lake Malawi's size, its warm fresh water and its beautiful beaches make it a magnet for those seeking a year-round location to swim, water-ski, sail, kayak, parasail or simply potter about in boats. The clarity of the water and the presence of some 1000 species of tropical fish make the snorkeling and diving seem like being in an aquarium. Almost all the lodges and hotels along the lakeshore have equipment for watersports and there are dive schools offering PADI courses. Kayaking and sailing can range from an hour or so on the water to a full kayaking expedition or living aboard a luxury yacht as it sails the length of the lake.



On The Land

From trekking up Mount Mulanje, looking out for miles from the top of Zomba Plateau, to exploring the rolling hills of Nyika, and hiking through the jungle in Nkhotakota - there is so much to discover simply on foot. For the more adventurous, why not give horse riding a go, jump on a mountain bike, or try your hand at quad biking. There are even art tours, pottery classes, orienteering, abseiling and yoga courses! For those who find a week on a beach with a book not quite enough, there is plenty more on offer.

Wildlife Safaris

Two of the great attractions of Malawi's national parks and wildlife reserves are their completely unspoilt wildernesses and the absence of mass tourism. You really do feel you're looking at a scene recognisable from over 150 years ago. You discover the animals, they're not lined up for viewing as though in a theme park, and with very limited concessions in any one reserve there's no gridlock of vehicles. There's a wide choice of safari. You can use open-topped 4x4 vehicles for your game drives or you can really get to know the country and its wildlife on a walking safari – perhaps even track a rhino! Or try a boat safari along the Shire River - a wonderful way to see the animals close-up as they seem unfrightened by people in a boat. You can float close to the hundreds of hippos and watch the elephants drink just a few metres away.

Cultural & Music

Malawi's people are its greatest asset - friendly, welcoming, colourful and vibrant. It is impossible to visit and not become engaged with the people, with excellent opportunities to spend time in real villages (including overnight) for a first-hand experience of the cultures, traditions and daily life. These visits are usually the highlight of any trip and can be arranged through most lodges. The country has a thriving music scene and there are many opportunities to see local artists, from small concerts to the internationally renowned Lake of Stars Festival.



Responsible Travel

Ask most Malawi lodge owners if they have a 'Responsible Tourism Policy' and it's unlikely you'll find many such formal documents. But ask if they work closely with communities, provide good employment opportunities and actively initiate sustainable projects of conservation and development in their local area, and they will be incredulous that you even had to ask! For many, it's the very reason they are there. Tourism has the potential to be a significant engine of economic growth for Malawi and already the vast majority of lodges are ensuring that it has a direct, positive effect on the country and on as many Malawians as possible, as well as being sustainable for future generations. One thing you can be sure of in Malawi is that your tourism Dollar, Euro or Pound (or Kwacha!) is one that is very well spent.



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The Consortium comprises over 40 Malawian companies who represent the Best of Malawi. They cater for all the needs of international visitors, providing high quality accommodation and transport services and ensuring that the all travellers have a trouble-free, memorable and highly enjoyable stay in the country.

Our website has further information on all of Malawi's attractions and activities, as well as detailed information on its main lodges and tour & safari companies: everything you might need to plan a holiday in Malawi.

If you have queries or need some particular information, our Tourism Information Office is based in the UK but responds to worldwide enquiries. Replies are prompt and we have the most up-to-date and accurate information available on any aspect of travel to and within Malawi. This service is free and without obligation.