



# COUNTRY BRIEFING: Malawi

**Ruth Milligan's guide to a hidden gem of variety and contrasts in the heart of Africa**

## Geography & Culture

From the moment you step off the plane at Lilongwe Airport you feel the warmth and friendliness of this often overlooked country in the heart of Africa. Malawi is an economically poor country where subsistence farming remains the livelihood for a large proportion of the population but it is also a country of contrasts with a rich cultural heritage and a wealth of beautiful scenery.

Malawi is a relatively small country with about 20% of its land covered by the waters of Lake Malawi. Despite its size, it boasts some of Africa's most diverse and striking scenery, including rolling highlands, vibrant green tea plantations and villages dotted along the rough roads that lead to the lake.

### Thyolo & Liwonde

In the south of the country lies the fertile Thyolo region where much of the country's food is grown. Here, striking green tea plantations sprawl around the foothills of lofty Mount Mulanje in an area that is a haven for walkers. Also in the south is Liwonde, Malawi's premier national park, and while you will not see all of the Big Five here you will not be disappointed by the fabulous boat safaris along the palm fringed Shire River. Elephant and hippo bathe in the water and buffalo and antelope congregate on the banks. Visitors can stay at the luxurious Mvuu Lodge which has five well appointed safari tents.

### Nyika Plateau

Further to the north is the Nyika Plateau whose high altitude and rolling green hills bring to mind the Scottish highlands on a massive scale. Here you will find solitary leopard and herds of zebra and roan antelope. You can explore the plateau on game drives, on foot or best of all on horseback galloping alongside the antelope. Chelinda Lodge is the place to stay here with log cabins complete with claw foot baths and roaring fires to keep out the highland evening chill.

### Lake Malawi

In the heart of Malawi lies the huge "Lake of Stars". There are many activities to enjoy in and around the lake, including snorkelling and diving in the clear waters to see the brightly coloured cichlid fish, kayaking, swimming and sailing. My favourite places to stay at the lake are Kayak Africa's island hideaways, Mumbo and Domwe Islands, accessed by kayak. Alternatively, Nkwichi Lodge is located on the most stunning white beach on the Mozambique shores of the Lake.

Surprisingly Malawi is still a country many people know very little about, perhaps because it isn't the traditional "safari holiday" destination of Africa. What it does offer is a chance to get off the beaten track and it combines well with a tour of Zambia or Mozambique.

A trip to Malawi is a trip to a real Africa away from the tourist masses – an Africa with undoubted hardships but also beauty, colour, spirit and warmth. By staying here you will be contributing to the country's fragile economy and the extended families of each person working in the tourism industry. In return you will receive a warm Malawian welcome and some unforgettable experiences. Now is the perfect time to visit before the secret of Malawi gets out.

**Ruth Milligan**  
Malawi Specialist



Kayaking around Domwe Island



Tea plantations, Thyolo



Nkwichi Lodge



Riding on Nyika Plateau



Nkwichi Beach, Lake Malawi



## Best of Malawi

Here are two suggested itineraries for discovering the best of the north and south of Malawi. These itineraries can be combined or our specialists can design a tailor-made itinerary to meet your specific interests. For further details please call Ruth on 01869 276 207.

### Northern Malawi (light aircraft transfers), from £2,575 per person based on two people sharing.

- Day 1** Fly from London to Johannesburg.
- Day 2** Fly from Johannesburg to Lilongwe. Light aircraft flight from Lilongwe to Nyika Plateau. four nights at Chelinda Lodge on Nyika Plateau (all meals and some activities included).
- Day 3** Day of activities from Chelinda – includes game drives, night drives and walks.
- Days 4 & 5** Day of activities from Chelinda.
- Day 6** Light aircraft flight from Nyika to Likoma Island in Lake Malawi. Speedboat transfer from Likoma Island to Mozambique shores. Clear customs and take the boat to Nkwichi Lodge. Three nights Nkwichi Lodge (all meals and activities included).
- Day 7** Day at leisure at Nkwichi – snorkelling, walking, swimming, beach time, visit the local eco-projects. Picnic at the giant baobab tree or walk up to the scenic look-out.
- Day 8** Day at leisure at Nkwichi.

**Day 9** Speedboat to Likoma Island. Light aircraft to Lilongwe. Fly from Lilongwe to Johannesburg for onward connection to London.

### Southern Malawi itinerary (road transfers), from £1,895 per person based on two people sharing.

- Day 1** Fly from London to Johannesburg.
- Day 2** Fly from Johannesburg to Lilongwe. Road transfer from Lilongwe to Liwonde National Park. Three nights at Mvuu Lodge (including all meals and game viewing activities).
- Day 3** Day of game viewing at Mvuu (includes boat safaris, game drives and walks).
- Day 4** Day of game viewing at Mvuu.
- Day 5** Road transfer from Mvuu to Cape Maclear. Kayak out to Domwe Island. Four nights at Domwe Island (diving, boat trips and meals included).
- Day 6** Day at leisure on Domwe Island – beaches, snorkelling, diving, kayaking, walking and exploring the island on foot.
- Days 7 & 8** Day at leisure on Domwe.
- Day 9** Kayak back to Cape Maclear and then road transfer to Lilongwe. Fly from Lilongwe to Johannesburg for onward connection to London.

*A tour combining the two itineraries above would cost from £3,490 per person, based on two people sharing.*