

Leokwe Rest Camp, Mapungubwe National Park – Access for Guests with Mobility Challenges

Leokwe is the largest rest camp in Mapungubwe National Park. It is a wonderful setting, located in a sheltered clearing surrounded by sandstone outcrops and baobab trees. There are 18 units, 2 of which are accessible to guests with mobility challenges, with ramped access and converted ablutions. There is also a central communal area with a plunge pool, a viewing deck, a kitchen and boma area for catering for groups larger than the individual units. This central facility does have an accessible toilet, but the rest of the facility, apart from the deck above the pool, is not accessible to a person in a wheelchair because of steps to different levels.



The accommodation units – known as cottages - are very comfortable. They comprise 2 basic sections; a bedroom chamber with en suite ablutions; and a living room section with an open plan kitchen. Additionally there are outside braai boma and eating areas on the far side of the units.

The parking outside the 2 accessible units is of ample space on either side of the car doors, so exiting and entering a vehicle is not a problem as there is open space on either side of the vehicle. However the ground surface, while firm in places is soft powdery sand in places and this compromises the ability for a wheelchair user to move around, particularly when carrying luggage.




Once disembarking from one's vehicle there is an access pathway leading to the front doors of the accessible units. This is gravel at first, but paved for the final few metres leading up to the door. Where the paved surface changes to gravel a deep ramp of the appropriate gradient has been inserted as erosion was a problem at this point and made it difficult to negotiate in a wheelchair

A nice touch from the park's technical staff is to provide the front door with a grab handle on the door's inside to allow wheelchair users to close the door behind them. This was formerly a problem as the conventional handle was too far out of reach when a wheelchair user has passed through the doorway.



The main bedroom comprises of 2 single beds which have ample space to negotiate around and convenient shelves to set things on all around the room. Other nice touches from an access perspective are plugs at a convenient height for a person in a chair and the air-conditioner (so often positioned high up on a wall and out of reach for a person in a chair) is at a low and well-situated height.

		
	<p>In the ablutions the toilet is located adjacent a shortened wall that provides the entrance to an external shower area. This unfortunately means that the cranked grab rail cannot be positioned in the required position for the ideal layout. It has thus been positioned in an unusual reverse position, but at least this means for a wheelchair user the required horizontal support is in the appropriate position</p>	
<p>Another design shortcoming of the ablutions is that the basin is out of reach of the toilet, which is not ideal. The basin itself is also not very accessible. The shelf the basin is on is too low and allows no clearance underneath, while the basin itself is bowl shaped and is uncomfortable to use. Additionally the taps are not push style or lever, which will be problematic for some guests.</p>		
	<p>The units' showers are rather quaint facilities. There is a roll-in shower and a standard shower provided. The roll-in shower is not the most comfortable as the sliding pole is positioned behind the fold down seat and this seat is attached to a wooden pole that means the support from the latté is a few inches further back.</p>	
	<p>As mentioned earlier the other chamber of the unit is an open plan living area. This contains a double sleeper couch, a table with 4 chairs (and sufficient clearance underneath).</p>	
	<p>The unit's kitchen is open plan and is an extension of the living area. There is a fridge, microwave and hotplates, while all the required cutlery and crockery is provided. The twin sink does not have clearance space beneath it, but there is plenty of space alongside.</p>	
	<p>The outdoor braai boma offers an excellent vista of the surrounding landscape and the braai (barbecue is accessible from the front). The 2 shelves either side of the braai have good clearance and can be used as a work surface or table. The ramp linking the boma to the interior has been inserted deeper than the outdoor ground level so that the erosion effect of heavy rain is minimized.</p>	