

Google Street View to launch in Botswana

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A Google Street View car charts the streets of Brasília, Brazil in 2011. Botswana will be the second African country to launch Google Street View, officials announced Thursday, saying the technology would boost the nation as a diamond exporter and safari destination.

Botswana will be the second African country to launch Google Street View, officials announced Thursday, saying the technology would boost the nation as a diamond exporter and safari destination.

"The initiative has come at a very crucial stage for Botswana because it will heighten our campaign to promote the country as a diamond centre and destination of choice for tourists," government spokesman Jeff Ramsay told a press conference.

The service will feature images of streets and landscapes in capital Gaborone, second city Francistown, and tourist destinations such as the

[Kalahari Desert](#), wildlife-flush Chobe National Park and the Makgadikgadi salt pans, officials said.

It is expected to launch in about seven months.

[Google](#) spokeswoman for Sub-Saharan Africa Julie Taylor said the panoramic street-level images would help Botswana's rapidly growing tourism industry.

"We already have requests from safari companies in the Okavango Delta, which is the largest inland delta in the world, because they have realised that it is one of the best marketing tools," she said.

The decision to target Botswana was based in part on its wildlife, she added.

Tourism currently makes up around 10 percent of Botswana's \$14.9-billion (11.2-billion-euro) economy. Diamond sales, the country's boom industry, make up about one-third.

Google also wants to find ways to improve the southern African country's Internet access, Taylor said.

"We will also seek to work closely with mobile network companies, as cell phones are now the major tool used to access the Internet," she said.

South Africa, the continent's largest economy, became the first African country to launch Google [Street View](#) in 2009.

Street View, which was launched in 2006, lets users take a virtual "drive" through cities and along roads, viewing panoramic scenes on Google Maps.

Images are taken by cars equipped with special cameras which photograph an area while driving through.

The images are then processed in the United States, where details such as faces and registration plates are automatically blurred before being published on [Google Maps](#).

Street View is available in more than 30 countries worldwide, but the service has raised hackles over the privacy issues raised by the images randomly captured by the cars.

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