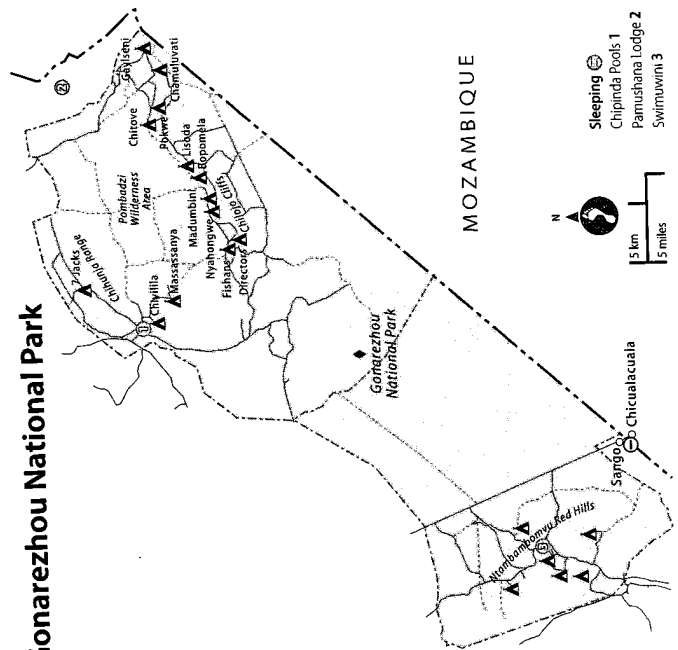


Pools signpost. Follow the gravel road for approximately 34 km to the entrance of the park, which in total is 59 km from Chiredzi. Further into the park from Chipinda Pools Camp are a series of undeveloped campsites (see Sleeping, page 133) which afford the best views of the Chilolo Cliffs.

For **Mabalautu**, turn east off the Masvingo–Beitbridge road (A4) at the turn-off to the Mwenzezi police station, about 20 km south of Rutenga, and proceed down the dirt road for about 3 km. Turn left at the entrance to the police station – you may need to ask for directions from here, but do not turn off this road, which follows the Mwenzezi River southeast to Chikombedzi (the river will not be visible from the road). The only intersection you will encounter is 20 km from the Mwenzezi police station but head straight through to Chikombedzi. After entering Chikombedzi, where a national parks sign indicates the route to Gonarezhou, turn right. The total distance from the Masvingo–Beitbridge road to Mabalautu (where there is a park office and the Shimuwini Rest Camp) is about 105 km. Note that this latter route is very unpredictable: the roads are terrible, so allow lots of time and ask locals the way. The Mabalautu region can also be accessed from Mozambique through the Sango border post (see page 130), and on another rough track outside the park from Chipinda Pools.

Getting around A 4WD is essential. Some of the gravel roads in and out of the park are fairly passable in the dry season, but if you want to go off the beaten track and follow the

Gonarezhou National Park



Africa's Rio Grande

The Limpopo River marks the 300-km border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and Beitbridge is the only border post. For a decade now, the river has been likened to the Rio Grande, the river marking the border between the US and Mexico, over which thousands of Mexicans try to cross illegally in search of a better life in the US. When the recent political and economic problems in Zimbabwe were at their height, several thousand Zimbabweans attempted to cross this border every week, in the hope of a better future in South Africa. Some crossed legally and legitimately through Beitbridge to shop in South Africa, and then returned with much-needed provisions (supermarkets shelves were bare in Zimbabwe). For the most part, though, they crossed the crocodile-infested Limpopo illegally, and then had to get through three walls of fortified fencing on the South African

fainter tracks only 4WDs will do, and you might want to consider a GPS. Tracks can peter out and you may be forced to follow your own tyre tracks back. Always ask the wardens at the entrance gates which tracks are navigable.

Best time to visit Gonarezhou experiences mild, dry winters and warm, wet summers with temperatures that can exceed 40°C. The Mabalautu and Chipinda Pools areas are open throughout the year, but during the rainy season (November to April), access to certain parts of the park is restricted; visitors should consult with the wardens before undertaking game drives.

Sights

Gonarezhou is now part of the 35,000-sq-km **Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park** (www.greatlimpopopark.com) that links the **Kruger National Park** in South Africa and the **Parque Nacional do Limpopo** in Mozambique. Animals can move freely between the three sanctuaries. Gonarezhou was formed in 1975 by uniting former hunting areas and large fly control corridors, though the park was closed to the public during the Rhodesian Bush War and again during much of the Mozambique Civil War due to movements of troops over the remote borders. Gonarezhou means 'place of many elephants' in Shona and as the name implies is well known for its large herds of elephant with unusually large tusks. During the park's closures in the war years, elephants were hunted by guerrillas and poachers after ivory. However, when the park re-opened in 1994, it was found that