

Postal Rate of Botswana. By Gordon Smith

This article is an update to the work of Peter Thy published in the Runner Post, the journal of the Bechuanalands and Botswana Society in issue 26 in March of 1992, a copy of which can be found at <https://postalhistory.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Botswana-Postal-Rate-Article.pdf>.

The first column in Table 1 lists the rates that were in effect at independence. As noted by Mr. Thy, “the transition in the postal services at independence on 30th September 1966 was gradual. Therefore, proclamations and legal notices issued by the Protectorate administration were still in effect in the Republic for a short period.” The rates at independence were originally instituted in 1963 and 1965 and were the rates until the new Republic of Botswana issued its first postal regulation, Notice No. 107 of 1966 which set postal rates as of 3 January 1967. Currency in use in Botswana at the time was South African Rand and cents.

The next rate changes occurred in 1971 to reflect Botswana’s shift to the metric system. In 1976, Botswana withdrew from the Rand Monetary Area under which the South African Rand had been the legal currency in Botswana since independence in 1966. However, it was not until 1978 that postal rates were changed to the new currency of Pula and thebe. The weights used to determine the rating structure were reduced for Surface Mail in 1975 and for Airmail in 1982. The whole system of classifying mail for the application of rates was revamped in 2001 to move away from the use of weights to the use of dimensions.

Despite the rapid rise in the cost of mailing items from the mid-1990’s until now, the rate increases are congruent with comparators. As Chart 1 shows, the trend in the cost of mailing a letter within the country is similar to changes in the consumer price index for the country¹, i.e. increases in the cost of mailing a letter followed the trend of general increases in prices within the country.

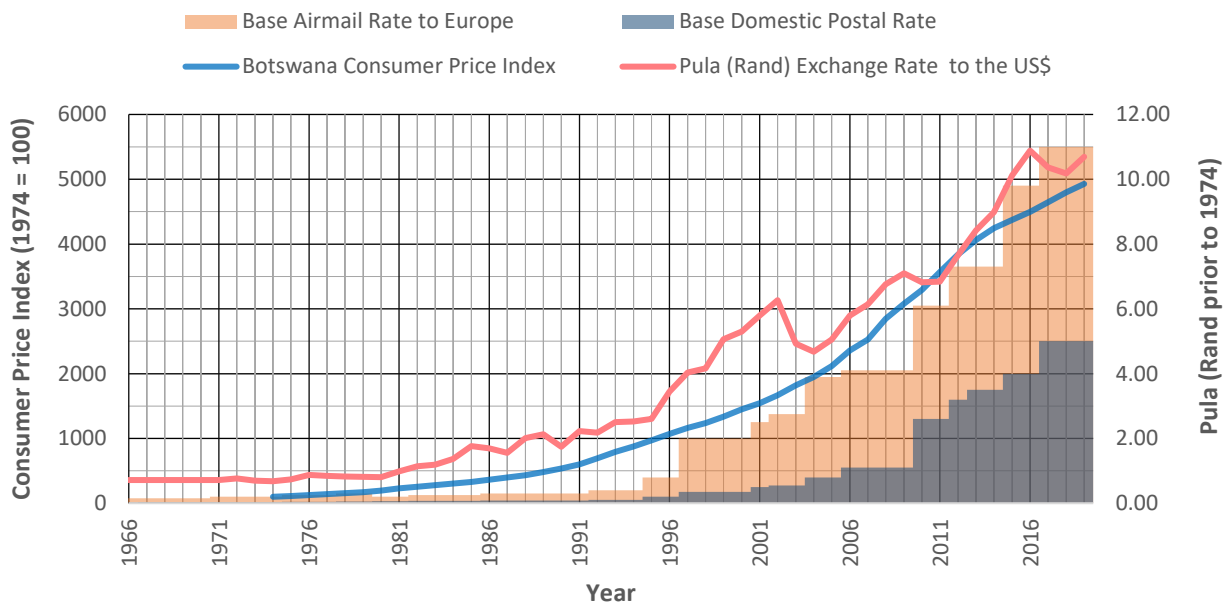
Many of the influencers of the cost of transporting mail internationally vary from those affecting the costs of mailing within Botswana. As the designated world reserve currency from 1944 until 1971 and the de facto one since, the exchange rate of the Pula (and Rand prior to 1974) to the US Dollar² provides a good index against which to compare changes in international postal rates. Chart 1 shows that the rates for international mail have followed a similar trend as the internal rates.

Interestingly, this chart also shows that changes in the consumer price index in Botswana have closely followed changes in the Pula / US Dollar exchange rate.

¹ Consumer Price Index information obtained from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL?locations=BW>

² US Dollar exchange rate data obtained from <https://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchange-rates.php>

Chart 1: Comparison of Botswana Postal Rates to Consumer Price Index and Pula / US\$ Exchange Rate



The compilation of rates provided in this article does not cover all the rates and is focused on uses that collectors of postal history are likely to see. Therefore, as per Mr. Thy's article, mail exceeding 100 grams has not been included and some types of mail such as parcels, samples, and small parcels are not covered. Complete rate information is available from the regulations and tariff guides for the Botswana Post Office which can be found on the author's website at <https://postalhistory.ca/botswana-postal-rates-and-legislation/>.

The dates provided for the rate changes are based on the legal announcements by the government of Botswana whilst the Post Office was a government department and, following 1989, when the organization became a parastatal, the tariff guides provided by BotswanaPost. Information on the rates are compiled from the article by Mr. Thy covering the period up to 1986, and the tariff guides provided by BotswanaPost for the remaining period. As a parastatal, BotswanaPost was likely charged with becoming a breakeven operation. As an organization which probably did not have to get new rates approved by the parliament, the organization was able to be a bit more nimble and adjusted its' rates frequently through the inflationary period of the 1990's and early 2000's continuing through a period of rising costs in the 2000's and 2010's.

Mr. Thy has done an admirable job of reconciling various sources of information and his article provides information on situations in which he has found conflicting information where official dates and rates may differ due to the administrative enforcement of the regulations. His note of caution that printing errors and other mistakes appear to be common in the published regulations is repeated here.

The author would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of Peter Thy and Lena Bay in obtaining the rate regulations and tariff guides.

Bibliography

Selected Postal Rates of Botswana, Compiled by Peter Thy (November 1991), The Runner Post, Issue 26, March 1992, p. 495

Table 1: Postal Rates in Botswana at Independence

	instituted on 12 Dec. 1963
	instituted on 17 Dec. 1965
	instituted on 24 Dec. 1965
	not listed in regs, but listed in phone book

	Rands and cents	
	In Use at Independence 30 Sep. 1966	3 Jan. 1967
Surface Letter to countries in the African Postal Union (APU)*-first oz.	0.025	0.03
Surface Letter to countries in the African Postal Union-add/oz.	0.01	0.01
Surface Letter to countries in the British Commonwealth excl. APU-first oz.	0.035	0.02
Surface Letter to countries in the British Commonwealth excl. APU-add/oz.	0.02	0.02
Surface Letter to other countries-first oz.	0.05	0.05
Surface Letter to other countries-add/oz.	0.03	0.03
Postcards to countries in the APU	0.02	0.02
Postcards to countries in the British Commonwealth excl. APU	0.025	0.03
Postcards to other countries	0.03	0.03
Printed Papers to countries in the APU-first 2 oz.	0.01	0.01
Printed Papers to countries in the APU-add/4 oz.	0.01	0.01
Printed Papers to countries in the British Commonwealth-first 2 oz.	0.02	0.02
Printed Papers to countries in the British Commonwealth-add/4 oz.	0.01	0.01
Printed Papers to other countries-first 2 oz.	0.025	0.02
Printed Papers to other countries-add/4 oz.	0.01	0.01
Commercial Mail to countries in the APU-per 2 oz.	0.01	no change
Commercial Mail to other countries-per 2 oz.	0.015**	
Airmail Letters in Botswana-per 0.5 oz.	n/a	0.04
Airmail Letters to countries in the APU / southern Africa-per 0.5 oz.	0.035	0.04
Airmail Letters to rest of Africa-per 0.5 oz.	0.10	0.10
Airmail Letters to Europe-per 0.5 oz.	0.15	0.15
Airmail Letters to the Near / Middle East-per 0.5 oz.	0.125	0.15
Airmail Letters to Indian Region-per 0.5 oz.	0.175	0.20
Airmail Letters to the Americas-per 0.5 oz.	0.225	0.25
Airmail Letters to Rest of World-per 0.5 oz.	0.25	0.25
Airmail Postcards in Botswana	n/a	0.03
Airmail Postcards to countries in the APU / southern Africa	0.025	0.03
Airmail Postcards to rest of Africa	0.05	0.05
Airmail Postcards to Europe	0.075	0.07
Airmail Postcards to the Near / Middle East	0.07	0.07
Airmail Postcards to Indian Region	0.09	0.10
Airmail Postcards to the Americas	0.12	0.12
Airmail Postcards to Rest of World	0.125	0.12
Aerogrammes in Botswana	n/a	0.03
Aerogrammes to countries in the APU / southern Africa	0.025	0.03
Aerogrammes to rest of Africa	0.05	0.07
Aerogrammes to Europe	0.05	0.07
Aerogrammes to the Near / Middle East	0.05	0.07
Aerogrammes to Indian Region	0.05	0.07
Aerogrammes to the Americas	0.10	0.10
Aerogrammes to Rest of World	0.10	0.10
Additional Registration charge for any postal article	0.05	no change

*In 1966 the countries of the African Postal Union (APU) comprised: Angola, Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), Burundi, Congo (Zaire), Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Mozambique, Swaziland, South Africa, South West Africa (Namibia).

** minimum 5c.

Table 2: Postal Rates in Botswana with Change to Metric System

	1 May 1971 Rands & cents
Surface Letter to countries in the African Postal Union* up to 30g	0.03
Surface Letter to countries in the African Postal Union above 30g up to 60g	0.05
Surface Letter to countries in the African Postal Union above 60g up to 100g	0.07
Surface Letter to countries in the British Commonwealth up to 30g	0.04
Surface Letter to countries in the British Commonwealth above 30g up to 60g	0.07
Surface Letter to countries in the British Commonwealth above 60g up to 100g	0.10
Surface Letter to other countries up to 30g	0.07
Surface Letter to other countries above 30g up to 60g	0.12
Surface Letter to other countries above 60g up to 100g	0.20
Postcards to countries in the African Postal Union	0.02
Postcards to countries in the British Commonwealth	0.03
Postcards to other countries	0.04
Printed & Commercial Papers to countries in the African Postal Union up to 30g	0.02
Printed & Commercial Papers to countries in the African Postal Union above 30g up to 100g	0.03
Printed & Commercial Papers to countries in the British Commonwealth up to 30g	0.03
Printed & Commercial Papers to countries in the British Commonwealth above 30g up to 100g	0.04
Airmail Letters to countries in the African Postal Union per 20g	0.04
Airmail Letters to rest of Africa per 20g	0.15
Airmail Letters to Europe and the Near East per 20g	0.20
Airmail Letters to Indian Region per 20g	0.30
Airmail Letters to Rest of World per 20g	0.35
Airmail Postcards to countries in the African Postal Union per 20g	0.03
Airmail Postcards to rest of Africa per 20g	0.05
Airmail Postcards to Europe and the Near East per 20g	0.07
Airmail Postcards to Indian Region per 20g	0.12
Airmail Postcards to Rest of World per 20g	0.15
Aerogrammes to countries in the African Postal Union per 20g	0.03
Aerogrammes to rest of Africa per 20g	0.07
Aerogrammes to Europe and the Near East per 20g	0.07
Aerogrammes to Indian Region per 20g	0.10
Aerogrammes to Rest of World per 20g	0.10
Additional Registration charge for any postal article	0.10

*Countries of the African Postal Union are Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Republic of Congo (Kinshasa), Lesotho, Mocambique, Malawi, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, South West Africa and Swaziland.

Table 3: Postal Rates in Botswana with Adjustment to Weights for Surface Mail

	1 May 1975 Rands & cents	5 Nov. 1978 Pula & thebe	7 Mar. 1980* Pula & thebe	1 Dec. 1980 Pula & thebe
Domestic Surface Letter up to 20g	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.06
Domestic Surface Letter above 20g up to 50g	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.09
Domestic Surface Letter above 50g up to 100g	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.12
Surface Letter to southern Africa** up to 20g	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.07
Surface Letter to southern Africa above 20g up to 50g	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.10
Surface Letter to southern Africa above 50g up to 100g	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.13
Surface Letter to other countries up to 20g	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.20
Surface Letter to other countries above 20g up to 50g	0.15	0.25	0.25	-
Surface Letter to other countries above 50g up to 100g	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.40
Domestic Postcards	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Postcards to Southern Africa	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Postcards to other countries	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.12
Domestic Printed Papers up to 20g	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Domestic Printed Papers above 20g up to 50g	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.08
Domestic Printed Papers above 50g up to 100g	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.10
Printed Papers to southern Africa up to 20g	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.05
Printed Papers to southern Africa above 20g up to 50g	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.08
Printed Papers to southern Africa above 50g up to 100g	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.10
Printed Papers to other countries up to 20g	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.10
Printed Papers to other countries above 20g up to 50g	0.10	0.12	0.12	-
Printed Papers to other countries above 50g up to 100g	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.20
Domestic Airmail Letters per 20g	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.06
Airmail to southern Africa per 20g	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.08
Airmail to rest of Africa per 20g	0.20	0.25	0.25	0.20
Airmail to Europe per 20g	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.20
Airmail to Near East per 20g	0.25	0.35	0.35	0.30
Airmail to Indian Region per 20g	0.35	0.45	0.45	0.30
Airmail to Americas per 20g	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.30
Airmail to Rest of World per 20g	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.30
Domestic Airmail Postcards	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05
Airmail Postcards to southern Africa	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.07
Airmail Postcards to rest of Africa	0.07	0.10	0.10	0.12
Airmail Postcards to Europe	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.15
Airmail Postcards to Near East	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.15
Airmail Postcards to Indian Region	0.15	0.18	0.18	0.22
Airmail Postcards to Americas	0.20	0.22	0.22	0.22
Airmail Postcards to Rest of World	0.20	0.22	0.22	0.25
Domestic Aerogrammes	0.05	service not listed		
Aerogrammes to southern Africa	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.07
Aerogrammes to rest of Africa	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.20
Aerogrammes to Europe	0.10	0.15	0.15	0.20
Aerogrammes to Near East	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.25
Aerogrammes to Indian Region	0.15	0.20	0.20	0.25
Aerogrammes to Americas	0.15	0.20	0.20	0.25
Aerogrammes to Rest of World	0.15	0.20	0.20	0.25
Additional registration charge	0.15	0.20	0.20	0.25

The dashes are direct reproductions of what is in the postal regulations.

* An additional rate regulation was published on 21 March 1980, but it did not make any changes to the rates listed here, except to add "Mail within Botswana is transported by means which will achieve earliest postal delivery. In the event of mail being transported by air, there will be no special charge and there is no need for airmail marking." This is also noted in 1978.

** In the 1975 listing, countries in southern Africa include Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rhodesia, South Africa & Swaziland. In the 1978 regulation and onwards, Angola is removed. In the 1 Dec. 1980 regulation, Mozambique is removed and Rhodesia has become Zimbabwe.

Table 4: Postal Rates in Botswana with Adjustment to Weights for Airmail

	Denominated in Pula and thebe				
	01 Apr. 1982	01 Apr. 1986	02 Oct. 1992	01 Jul. 1995	01 Aug. 1997
Domestic Surface Letter up to 20g	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.20	0.35
Domestic Surface Letter above 20g up to 50g	0.11	0.12	0.15	0.30	0.55
Domestic Surface Letter above 50g up to 100g	0.14	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Surface Letter to southern Africa up to 20g	0.08	0.12	0.15	0.30	0.55
Surface Letter to southern Africa above 20g up to 50g	0.12	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Surface Letter to southern Africa above 50g up to 100g	0.20	0.35	0.45	0.90	1.60
Surface Letter to other countries up to 20g	0.25	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.25
Surface Letter to other countries above 20g up to 50g	-	-	-	0.00	2.45
Surface Letter to other countries above 50g up to 100g	0.45	0.55	0.70	1.40	2.45
Domestic Postcards	0.05	0.07	0.10	0.20	0.35
Postcards to Southern Africa	0.06	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Postcards to other countries	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.50	0.90
Domestic Printed Papers up to 20g	0.06	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.35
Domestic Printed Papers above 20g up to 50g	0.09	0.12	0.15	0.30	0.55
Domestic Printed Papers above 50g up to 100g	0.12	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Printed Papers to southern Africa up to 20g	0.06	0.12	0.15	0.30	0.55
Printed Papers to southern Africa above 20g up to 50g	0.09	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Printed Papers to southern Africa above 50g up to 100g	0.12	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.25
Printed Papers to other countries up to 20g	0.12	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.70
Printed Papers to other countries above 20g up to 50g	-	-	-	0.00	1.60
Printed Papers to other countries above 50g up to 100g	0.25	0.35	0.45	0.90	1.60
Domestic Airmail Letters per 10g	0.07	0.12	0.15	0.30	0.55
Airmail to southern Africa per 10g	0.10	0.15	0.25	0.50	1.00
Airmail to rest of Africa per 10g	0.25	0.28	0.35	0.70	1.40
Airmail to Europe per 10g	0.25	0.30	0.40	0.80	2.00
Airmail to Near East per 10g	0.35	0.40	0.50	1.00	2.00
Airmail to Indian Region per 10g	0.35	0.40	0.50	1.00	2.50
Airmail to Americas per 10g	0.35	0.40	0.50	1.00	2.50
Airmail to Rest of World per 10g	0.35	0.40	0.50	1.00	2.50
Domestic Airmail Postcards	0.05	0.08	0.12	0.30	0.55
Airmail Postcards to southern Africa	0.08	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.80
Airmail Postcards to rest of Africa	0.15	0.20	0.25	0.50	1.00
Airmail Postcards to Europe	0.20	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.75
Airmail Postcards to Near East	0.20	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.40
Airmail Postcards to Indian Region	0.25	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.75
Airmail Postcards to Americas	0.25	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.75
Airmail Postcards to Rest of World	0.28	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.75
Domestic Aerogrammes	snl **	0.10	0.15	0.30	0.50
Aerogrammes to southern Africa	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.40	0.80
Aerogrammes to rest of Africa	0.22	0.25	0.35	0.70	1.40
Aerogrammes to Europe	0.23	0.30	0.40	0.80	1.90
Aerogrammes to Near East	0.30	0.35	0.45	0.90	1.90
Aerogrammes to Indian Region	0.30	0.35	0.45	0.90	2.25
Aerogrammes to Americas	0.30	0.35	0.45	0.90	2.25
Aerogrammes to Rest of World	0.30	0.35	0.45	0.90	2.25
Additional registration charge	0.30	0.40	0.50	1.00	1.75

* In this listing, countries in southern Africa include Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland & Zimbabwe.

** snl - service not listed

Table 5: Postal Rates in Botswana with New System of Weights and Dimensions for Rates

	Denominated in Pula and thebe									
	01 Sep. 2001	01 Jul. 2002	01 May. 2004	04 Sep. 2006	01 Jun. 2010	01 Apr. 2012	19 Aug. 2013	01 May. 2015	01 Aug. 2017	
	Rates no longer distinguish between airmail and surface									
Domestic Standard Letter Surface (120x235x20)	0.50	0.55	0.80	1.10	2.60	3.20	3.50	4.00	5.00	
Domestic Large Letter Surface (229x324x20)	1.30	1.45	2.10	2.60	4.10	4.90	5.40	5.90	7.00	
Domestic Oversized Letter Surface (229x324x20)	2.10	2.35	3.30	4.00	5.50	6.60	7.30	7.80	9.00	
Standard Letter Surface to SADC*	1.00	1.10	1.60	1.80	5.40	6.50	7.10	new combined Air / Surface rate provided see below for rate		
Large Letter Surface to SADC	3.80	4.20	5.90	6.30	5.60	6.70	7.40			
Oversized Letter Surface to SADC	7.40	8.15	11.50	12.20	6.50	7.80	8.60			
Standard Letter Surface to rest of Africa	1.10	1.25	1.80	2.00	new combined Air / Surface rate provided see below for rate					
Large Letter Surface to rest of Africa	4.00	4.40	6.20	6.60						
Oversized Letter Surface to rest of Africa	8.00	8.80	12.40	13.20						
Standard Letter Surface to Europe	1.30	1.45	2.10	2.30						
Large Letter Surface to Europe	4.50	4.95	7.00	7.40						
Oversized Letter Surface to Europe	9.00	9.90	13.90	14.70						
Standard Letter Surface to rest of World	1.50	1.65	2.40	2.60						
Large Letter Surface to rest of World	5.00	5.50	7.70	8.10						
Oversized Letter Surface to rest of World	10.00	11.00	15.40	16.20						
Standard Letter Airmail to SADC	1.75	1.95	2.80	3.00					5.50	6.60
Large Letter Airmail to SADC	5.00	5.50	7.70	8.20	5.90	7.10	7.80	8.60	10.00	
Oversized Letter Airmail to SADC	10.00	11.00	15.40	16.20	7.70	9.20	10.20	10.70	15.00	
Standard Letter Airmail to rest of Africa	2.00	2.20	3.10	3.30	5.60	6.70	7.30	8.70	10.00	
Large Letter Airmail to rest of Africa	6.00	6.60	9.30	9.80	6.40	7.70	8.50	9.70	11.00	
Oversized Letter Airmail to rest of Africa	12.00	13.20	18.50	19.50	9.40	11.30	12.50	13.30	20.00	
Standard Letter Airmail to Europe	2.50	2.75	3.90	4.10	6.10	7.30	8.00	9.80	11.00	
Large Letter Airmail to Europe	8.50	9.35	13.10	13.60	7.80	9.40	10.40	11.90	13.00	
Oversized Letter Airmail to Europe	15.00	16.50	23.10	24.10	14.50	17.40	19.20	19.90	30.00	
Standard Letter Airmail to rest of World	3.00	3.30	4.70	4.90	6.10	7.30	8.00	10.30	12.00	
Large Letter Airmail to rest of World	10.00	11.00	15.40	15.90	8.00	9.60	10.60	12.60	14.00	
Oversized Letter Airmail to rest of World	18.00	19.80	27.40	28.80	15.30	18.40	20.40	21.40	40.00	
Postcard within Botswana	0.50	0.55	0.80	1.10	service not listed					
Surface Postcard to SADC	0.80	0.90	1.60	1.80						
Surface Postcard to rest of Africa	0.80	0.90	1.80	2.00						
Surface Postcard to Europe	0.80	0.90	2.10	2.30						
Surface Postcard to rest of World	0.80	0.90	2.40	2.60						
Airmail Postcard to SADC	1.75	1.95	2.80	3.00						
Airmail Postcard to rest of Africa	1.75	1.95	3.10	3.30						
Airmail Postcard to Europe	1.75	1.95	3.90	4.10						
Airmail Postcard to rest of World	1.75	1.95	4.70	4.90						
Aerogram within Botswana	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a						
Aerogram to SADC	1.75	1.95	2.80	3.00						
Aerogram to rest of Africa	1.75	1.95	3.10	3.30						
Aerogram to Europe	1.75	1.95	3.90	4.10						
Aerogram to rest of World	1.75	1.95	4.70	4.90						
Registration Fee	?	?	?	5.50	5.60	8.10	8.90	9.40	10.00	

* SADC = Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Madagascar joined SADC in 2005.