

## **Namibia overview:**

The Republic of Namibia is in the south-western part of Africa. It has a population of about 2.1 million inhabitants and is 824292 km<sup>2</sup> big. Parts of Namibia are notoriously dry and much of the country is made up of the Namib Desert and the Kalahari. Towards the north the country becomes greener with the Etosha Pan filling with water from northern rivers. This area is rich in diverse wildlife. The Skeleton Coast marks the area where the Namib meets the Atlantic Ocean and is littered with wrecks of ships that ran ashore in the treacherous waters, whalebone shelters used by the San and ghost towns that boomed during the early diamond days.

The country is bordered by Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The Orange River marks the southern border of Namibia to South Africa. The Kunene River and the Okavango River form partly the northern border with Angola.

It is the first country in the world that has incorporated the protection of the environment into its constitution. Due to its harsh environment Namibia is sparsely populated with various groups. Its population is made up of San, Damaras, Ovambos, Namas, Hereros, Oorlams, Kavangos, East Caprivians, Rehoboth Basters, Kaokovelders, Tswanas and European settlers, mostly German.

Listed are some of the attractions Namibia has to offer:

- Namib-Naukluft Park
- Etosha National Park
- Waterberg Plateau Park
- Epupa Falls
- Skeleton Coast Park
- Fish River Canyon
- Kolmanskop
- Brandberg
- Petrified Forest
- Rock engravings at Twyfelfontein
- Sossusvlei and Deadvlei
- Welwitschia Mirabilis

### **Namib-Naukluft Park**



The vast Namib-Naukluft Park boasts sweeping desert and mountain landscapes, a diverse range of wildlife, and the surreal Sossusvlei, a scenic saltpan with towering red sand dunes and petrified acacia trees and is one of the world's largest nature and game reserves. This conservation area is within the oldest desert worldwide, the Namib, it covers an area of nearly 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is the largest protected area in the country. The park

was formed by merging several regions (Namib, Naukluft, Sossusvlei/Sesriem, and Sandwich Harbour). Activities such as hiking, game drives, and camping are some of the things to do in Namib-Naukluft Park.

### **Etosha National Park**



Etosha

National Park is Namibia's prime wildlife location and the gateway to Northern Namibia and Ovamboland. Etosha means the 'great white area' this refers to large saltpan in the middle of the Etosha Park that is so large it can be seen from space.

Floodlit waterholes at all the main camps makes this park unique. There is abundant wildlife that congregate around the waterholes, giving you almost guaranteed game sightings. Strategically placed watering holes can be found throughout the park as well, this makes for easy wildlife sightings and exciting predator-prey interaction.

The park is accessible in a regular sedan. Rest camps provide a range of accommodation, restaurants, viewing decks, shops and petrol stations. Peak season in Etosha is August to November.

### **Waterberg Plateau Park**



This mountainous park is situated 300km, north-east of Windhoek and is home for about 25 game and over 200 bird species. Vegetation changes dramatically from acacia savannah at the foot of the plateau to lush-green sub-tropical woodland, with tall trees and grassy plains, at the top.

The Waterberg Plateau, towers 200m above the surrounding plains. The porous sandstone table mountain stretches for 50 km and is 20 km wide. The plateau is arid on top but there are strong permanent springs at the foot of the mountain. The vegetation quite lush, green and diverse. Endangered species like the Black

and White Rhino, Sable Antelope and Blue Wildebeest, have been introduced. Activities available include a guided Plateau hike, game drives or explore the various hiking trails.

### **Epupa Falls**



This magnificent waterfall is on the border of Angola and Namibia, in the Kunene river. The river is 0.5 km wide and cascades in a series of waterfalls spread over 1.5 km. The greatest single drop is about 60 m high. Epupa Falls is situated amid the arid desert-land and green oasis of palm and baobab trees along the riverbed.

### **Skeleton Coast Park**



The long stretch of coast north of Swakopmund known as the world's biggest ship graveyard. Unique scenic attractions are the untouched profile of the landscape, clay castles, the salt pans near the Agate Mountain, and the seal colony at Cape Frio. With a bit of luck, you can spot gemsbok, springbok, jackal, ostrich and hyena. Desert-adapted elephant, Black Rhino, lion and giraffe roam the dry river courses. The largest of the world's nine fur seals species has established itself at Cape Cross, an enormous colony of about 100,000 fur seals

The southern part of this conservation area, up to the Terrace Bay, is only accessible with a permit. The northern part can only be visited with a private safari company.

## **Fish River Canyon**



The Canyon situated along the lower reaches of the Fish River which is the longest river in Namibia. The Fish River Canyon is the second largest canyon in the world, with a depth of up to 550 m and is 161 km long.

The enormous gorge meanders through the fissured Koubis Massif all the way down to Ai-Aisal for approx. 160 km.

During the dry season, the river bed is often completely dry or reduced to only an occasional puddle. After the summer rainfall the river can become a raging torrent. The Fish River Canyon offers spectacular and stunning photographic views, "Hell's Bend" being one of the most popular.

The Canyon is a popular hiking destination. The hike is 5 days and 86 km and requires good physical health and should only be undertaken during the cooler winter months (May to September). Guided hikes are arranged upon request.

## **Kolmanskop**



The south-west coast of Namibia plunged into "diamond fever" in 1908. People rushed to the Namib Desert hoping to make an easy fortune. Within two years, the town of Kolmanskop was established, complete with a casino, school, hospital and exclusive residential buildings, in the barren sandy desert.

Over 1 000 kg of diamonds was extracted before World War I. The number of gemstones greatly diminished after the war and considerably larger diamonds were found to the south near Oranjemund, causing picturesque Kolmanskop to become a deserted "ghost town". Today it stands left out in the sands.

## **Brandberg**



The Brandberg Mountain Range– or just the Brandberg – is situated in the Erongo region in the west of Namibia about 90 km from the Atlantic Ocean and covers an area 760 km<sup>2</sup> and is Namibia's highest mountain. The mountain range impressively surmounts its surrounding by some 2000 meters.

The name Brandberg derives from the glowing colours that the setting sun paints onto the mountain range, as if the mountain was on fire. The town of Uis is the closest town about 30 km away and offers several overnight facilities.

## **Petrified Forest**



The Petrified Forest is a national monument, situated about 50 km west of Khorixas. The forest is an accumulation of enormous fossilized tree trunks about 280 million years old. Scientist found out that these trunks hadn't grown in today's Namibia but were washed down a river when one of the many Ice Ages ended on the Gondwana continent. A huge flood must have carried the trunks to where they lie today.

Sand and mud carried by the flood covered the trees to such an extent that air intrusion was prevented and consequently no decay took place. The organic material of the trunks was conserved. Due to enormous pressure and over a period of millions of years even the finest structures of the wood have been dissolved by silicic acid and replaced by quartz, which is silicic acid in crystalline state. The result is perfectly conserved and completely petrified trunks. Erosion exposed many of these trunks and amongst many smaller specimens two fully exposed trees measuring up to 45 m have been discovered. Geologists found that the trees belong to the family of the Cordaites tree, which grew a long time ago in today's Europe and was the ancestor of firs and spruces.

## **Rock engravings at Twyfelfontein**



Twyfelfontein is famous because of its 2500 rock paintings and rock engravings (Petroglyphs) of the San (Bushmen). The age of the engravings is estimated at between 1000 – 10000 years. Remarkable is that the engravings were made without the use of metal tools. It is presumed that quartz tools were used instead as many quartz chips were found here.

The motives of the rock engravings are hunting scenes, in which the hunters are pictured with bow and arrow. Many animal engravings (antelopes, zebras, giraffes, lions, etc.) are also depicted. There is also an engraving of a seal, remarkable as the ocean is about 100 km away.

The valley is a national monument and the paintings/ engravings can only be visited with a local guide. UNESCO declared Twyfelfontein as World Heritage Site in 2007.

## **Sossusvlei and Deadvlei**

The largest sand dunes of the world. Sossusvlei and Dead Vlei can be found in the middle of the Namib Desert, in the Namib Naukluft Park.

Only a small part of the park is accessible for visitors: the Naukluft Mountains, Sossusvlei as well as some parts of the Kuiseb River. The huge protected area is about 500 km long and between 100 and 150 km wide.

### **Sossusvlei**



Sossusvlei (vlei=pan) is a salt-clay pan surrounded by dunes. In the Nama language Sossus means something like “blind river” and refers to the Tsauchab River, which when in flood seeps away in the desert without reaching Atlantic only 50km away.

60,000 years ago, the Tsauchab River presumably did flow into the Atlantic Ocean. Due to sanding up and cutting off the river it consists of different vleis, of which the Sossusvlei is the best known. To compound the situation the wind formed the famous up to 300-metre-high dunes, which surround the vleis. After exceptional rains the Tsauchab fills the clay pan with water and forms a lake, which remains for some time

thanks to the impermeable clay layers and which forms a beautiful contrast to the surrounding dune landscape with its turquoise water. This occurs very seldom, about every ten years.

### **Dead Vlei**



Close to the Sossusvlei lies the impressive Dead Vlei. This Vlei has been cut off from the Tsauchab River by a large sand dune. The result being a large amount of dead camelthorn trees, conserved by the extremely dry climate which prohibits the trees to decay.

At the edge of the Dead Vlei one can climb the "Big Daddy" also called the "Crazy Dune" which is assumed to be the highest sand dune worldwide. Arrive in the early morning hours when attempting to climb the dune as it takes 1.5 to 2 hours and is extremely strenuous. The effort is rewarded with one of the most incredible views! Running down is fun and fast! After 45 kilometres the well-known Dune 45 is reached, which stands out due to its height and is a popular photo motif. The best time to photograph it is during the early morning hours and in the late afternoon when the sun creates a contrasting play of shadows.

### **Welwitschia Mirabilis**



The Welwitschia Mirabilis is a plant which is endemic to the Namib desert in Namibia and Southern Angola. Named after Friedrich Welwitsch who "discovered" the plant in 1859, some of the specimen are estimated to be between 1000 and 1500 years old. The plant only consists of a root a small stem and two leaves.

### **Walvis Bay**



A pleasant port city, Walvis Bay offers tourists a variety of urban entertainment options that complement its many natural attractions. Boasting a natural harbour and a flamingo-filled lagoon. Walvis Bay appeals to

sports enthusiasts interested in kayaking, fishing, and kitesurfing. If you're intent on adding as many adventures as possible to your Walvis Bay itinerary, consider dune boarding and golfing in the desert.

## **Sesriem**



Sesriem is a small settlement located in the Namib Desert, close to the southern end of the Naukluft Mountains. The "Sesriem gate" is the main access point to the Namib-Naukluft National Park for visiting Sossusvlei. Sesriem is essentially a filling station with basic services such as public telephones and a couple of small kiosks where travellers can get general supplies. There are several options for accommodation in the area, ranging from camping to 5-star Lodges. Hot air balloons depart in the early morning from the gate, providing scenic flights over the Sossusvlei dunes. Sesriem canyon is about 4 km from Sesriem itself. It is a natural canyon carved by the Tsauchab river in the local sedimentary rock, about a kilometre (0.6 mile) long and up to 30 meters (100 feet) deep. Sesriem is in Khomas Region.

## **Caprivi**



The Caprivi is 500 km long, narrow strip of land in the far northeast of Namibia. The Caprivi is the wettest region of the country with several major rivers like the Okavango, Kwando and Zambezi; all of them originating from Angola. There are also some smaller rivers like the Linyanti and the Chobe. The abundance of water in the Caprivi sustains a large variety of animal and around 450 bird species. Especially numerous are the elephants, though not easily spotted through the dense vegetation. There are a few Wildlife Reserves namely the Bwabwata, Mudumu, Lizauli and Mamili. There are no fences, so the animals can roam freely across the borders of the neighbouring countries of Botswana and Zambia.

Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe and Chobe National Park in Botswana, both popular tourist destinations in the north, are easily accessible. In the western part of the Caprivi, some 200 km east of Rundu, lays the Popa Falls. Rapids, rather than waterfalls, are situated where the Okavango River breaks through a 4-meter rocky intrusion in the riverbed. The falls lie amidst enthrallingly beautiful nature.



## **Quiver tree Forest and Mesosaurus Fossils**



Travellers to the south of Namibia will find a fascinating attraction near the town of Keetmanshoop, a large Quivertree Forest with thousands of quiver trees and Mesosaurus fossils. The Quiver tree – a living Fossil. One of the biggest attractions to our site is the thousands of Quiver trees, a literal paradise. At the Quiver tree Dolerite Park, we have over 5000 specimens, which make it the densest concentration of Quiver trees in Namibia.

The Mesosaurus is probably one of the most convincing examples to prove the drifting of continents. The same genus in the same rock formations is to be found in both southern Africa and South America. In southern Africa the fossils can be found in the Whitehill formations, while in South America they are found in the Irats Formations.

## **Windhoek**



Namibia's capital city Windhoek is in the heart of the country, it receives a constant influx of tourists, in part because of its international airport. With a pleasant climate and laidback atmosphere, the city is a great starting point for day trips and tours of Namibia's many attractions. You can admire historic monuments and German colonial architecture or enjoy signature dishes and handicrafts at any of one of the city's eateries and markets. Windhoek is in Khomas Region.

## **Swakopmund**



The resort town of Swakopmund is nestled in the sand dunes of the vast Namib Desert on Namibia's Atlantic coast. The town boasts the status of Namibia's adventure sports capital, thanks largely to its scenic beaches, where recreational opportunities abound. You can engage in everything from sandboarding and quad biking on the desert dunes, to surfing, golfing, and helicopter rides. You'll find plenty of accommodation, restaurants, and lively entertainment spots in Swakopmund, where a variety of operators provide desert tours, day-trips, camel safaris, and nature walks. Swakopmund is in Erongo Region.

