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FINDING YOUR AFRICA



## Namibia

Etosha National Park  
Caprivi Strip  
Damaraland  
Namib Naukluft Park  
Skeleton Coast  
Swakopmund  
Windhoek  
Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park  
Waterberg Plateau National Park



## INTRODUCTION

Pictures of elephant drinking at waterholes in the famous Etosha National Park are rightly familiar to many travellers but Namibia has many more attractions to tempt visitors. Although Etosha is the most visited National Park in the country the long coastline, desert regions and the sub-tropical Caprivi Strip have fascinating wildlife and offer spectacular scenery.

Namibia is a vast, sparsely populated country situated along the south Atlantic coast of Africa bordering South Africa in the south, Angola and Zambia in the north and Botswana in the east. It takes its name from the 80 million year old Namib Desert, one of the driest places on earth which stretches along the entire west coast of the country, covering the 800 mile Skeleton Coast. The Kalahari Desert, although named a desert is really semi-arid savannah, runs along its south-eastern border with Botswana.

The area of land sandwiched between Angola and Botswana is known as the Caprivi Strip. Elephant, lion, buffalo and a wide range of antelope and other species

occur in the game reserves of this region and birdlife is prolific. Windhoek is the capital city and is well connected to the rest of Southern Africa by means of daily flights and an excellent road network.

In the Caprivi elephant, buffalo and other large game are found alongside broad tropical rivers which are also the habitat of hippos and crocodiles. The drier regions are no less interesting with an array of specialized plants and creatures which have adapted to arid conditions. The coast offers its own attractions including various adventure sports.



Etosha is Namibia's top wildlife destination, home to Africa's tallest elephants, the endangered black rhino, and 91 other species of mammal. Etosha is especially popular with photographers in the dry season who flock to the waterholes (along with the wildlife).





# HISTORY

Hunter gatherers roamed what is now Namibia thousands of years ago, some leaving a pictorial history of their lives painted on the walls of rock shelters and caves. During these times there were no political borders in the modern sense and the hunter gatherers moved freely between what are now Angola, Botswana, South Africa and Namibia.

Around 2000 years ago people related to today's Owambo and Kavango moved out of central Africa and finally settled in what is now northern Namibia and southern Angola, keeping cattle, planting crops and fishing. The Damara people arrived about 1100 years ago and settled in what is now central Namibia.

European hunters, explorers and missionaries began travelling through what is now Namibia with increasing regularity in the 19th century. Germany, anxious to keep pace with other colonial powers by establishing a foothold in Africa, annexed the region in 1884 and it became known as German South West Africa. Between 1892 and 1905 German forces brutally suppressed Herero and Nama uprisings. During the early years of the First World War, South Africa, acting on behalf of Britain, invaded South West Africa and clashed with German forces. After the war, the League of Nations granted South Africa a mandate to rule the country.

In 1946 the United Nations refused to allow South Africa to incorporate South West Africa into their territory and in the mid 1960's nationalist forces began a long struggle for independence. The war continued until 1989 when an agreement was reached and South African Forces withdrew.

In 1989 the UN supervised elections which the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) won and in 1990 Namibia achieved full independence. Namibia has held regular elections since 1990.

## PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ECONOMY

The majority of Namibians are from the Owambo and Kavango groups who come from the north of the country. This region is, besides the capital of Windhoek, the most densely populated part of the country and many people have relatives living in southern Angola.

Although some Namibians, primarily men, work in South Africa or Botswana, many others in Kavango and Owamboland keep cattle and grow crops such as maize, sorghum, millet and a variety of vegetables. Most Namibians retain strong links to rural areas. Namibia has rich deposits of alluvial diamonds along its Southern coast and diamond mining is a major earner of foreign exchange. Namibia is also one of the world's largest producers of uranium and zinc copper, other minerals are also mined. Commercial fishing is also economically important and employs large numbers of people.



## NAMIBIA IN BRIEF

- Capital City: Windhoek
- Area: 824,292 km<sup>2</sup> / 318,695 mi<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 2.1 million
- Time zone: GMT +1 Apr - Aug; GMT +2 Sept - March
- Currency: Namibian dollar (NAD)
- Electricity: 220V
- Geography: From sandy dunes to rocky canyons, Namibia is home to two deserts - the Namib and the Kalahari. In the north there is extensive woodland and several large rivers.
- Language: English, Oshiwambo and Afrikaans.

## CLIMATE

Swakopmund	Temp °C		Rainfall
	Min	Max	mm
Jan	15	20	0
Feb	15	20	0
Mar	15	20	0
Apr	12	18	0
May	11	20	0
Jun	10	20	0
Jul	9	18	0
Aug	8	15	0
Sep	10	16	0
Oct	10	17	0
Nov	11	17	0
Dec	13	19	0

## WHEN TO GO

Namibia has a dry climate typical of a semi desert country where droughts are a regular occurrence. Days are mostly warm to very hot and nights are generally cool. Sporadic rain falls in summer from November to March, and travelling at this time can be extremely hot!

Tsumeb	Temp °C		Rainfall
	Min	Max	mm
Jan	18	31	110
Feb	18	30	110
Mar	17	29	80
Apr	15	28	30
May	11	26	0
Jun	8	24	0
Jul	8	24	0
Aug	10	27	0
Sep	15	31	10
Oct	18	33	50
Nov	18	32	80
Dec	18	31	80





# HIGHLIGHTS

## ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK

Etosha is famous for its floodlit waterholes near the park headquarters which enables visitors to enjoy close up viewing of elephant and other large game drinking at night. Although a semi-arid area, Etosha is home to over 100 mammals, 340 birds, 110 reptile species, including many black rhino, wildebeest and zebra. The area also boasts some of the rarer antelope species such as black faced impala, Damara dik dik, suni and roan antelope. Due to the large antelope and zebra population lion, cheetah and leopard are common.

The park offers guided night drives as well as day drives. Etosha is situated three hours from Windhoek in the central north of Namibia and covers some 22,700 km<sup>2</sup> (8,600 mi<sup>2</sup>). The vast, white calcret pan (seasonal lake) was once a lake which dried up, probably due to climate change. After good rains the shallow water that gathers in the pans attracts large numbers of flamingos.



## DAMARALAND

Damaraland, in the North West, is scenically spectacular with a surprising amount of large mammals although they often move great distances in search of water. Seasonal water courses, which do not flow every year, cut across open plains and arid grassland and together with massive rocky outcrops and mountains create a remarkable landscape. Game species include desert elephant, black rhino, ostrich and springbok.

Ancient rock paintings have been found in the hills and mountains, including the famous 'White Lady' of the Brandberg. Sites of special interest include the capital Khorixas, Twyfelfontein (where the largest concentration of Stone Age petroglyphs in the country have been found), Organ Pipes (a mass of perpendicular dolerite pillars located in a river bed) and the Petrified Forest, where time has solidified ancient trees. The area has a wide variety of accommodation ranging from campsites to up market lodges.



## SKELETON COAST NATIONAL PARK

The Skeleton Coast National Park protects more than 500 km (310 miles) of Namibia's coastline and in total covers 16,845 km<sup>2</sup> (6,504 mi<sup>2</sup>). The coast, which is littered with the remains of grounded ships, is washed by the cold Benguela Current that generates thick fogs which sometimes shroud the beaches and bordering desert region, characterized by sand dunes and windswept plains and salt pans.

Freshwater springs create rare oases at some places in the desert that sustain pockets of wildlife. Springbok, gemsbok (oryx), the rare desert elephant, ostrich, jackal and brown hyena survive in this rugged terrain, along with vegetation like the ancient welwitschia plant which has adapted to the harsh conditions. Cape fur seals are found along the beaches.



## CAPRIVI STRIP

The Caprivi Strip is a 380 kilometre (250 miles) long, narrow strip of land in the far north east of Namibia that runs between Angola and Botswana, just north of the Okavango Delta. Germany exchanged the area with the United Kingdom for Zanzibar in 1890. The Caprivi has several major rivers, including the Zambezi River and the Okavango River, which either cut across the Strip or border it. Elephant, buffalo, sable antelope, lion and other large game occur in the Bwabwata and Mamili National Parks. Mamili helps conserve an important wetland that forms part of the Linyanti wetland system shared with neighbouring Botswana. Birdlife is prolific with more than 600 species recorded.

The Eastern Caprivi is bordered by the Zambezi River in the north and the game rich Chobe area in Botswana to the south. The Eastern Caprivi is also not far from Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls.





## NAMIB NAUKLUFT NATIONAL PARK

This 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> (19,300 mi<sup>2</sup>) conservation area protects a wide range of landscapes and wildlife. The region has a very small population and because it is so remote is a fantastic place for star-gazing. At Sossusvlei huge sand dunes formed by wind are a key attraction. The highest dunes measure 325 metres (1,072 feet) from base to crest and provide great photographic subjects as the light catches their sides, the red, pink and maroon sand contrasting with the white sands of the Tsachab river bed. Sossusvlei lies between the Namib Desert, one of the driest places on earth, to the west and the Kalahari to the east.

The Naukluft Mountains and the Kuiseb Canyon are scenically spectacular and Sandwich Harbour on the coast is an internationally recognized birding destination with flamingos, waders and seabirds frequenting the area. Huge sand dunes run straight into the sea here. Plant life in the area is highly specialized and includes the welwitchia, a ground hugging plant which is endemic to the region. Some of these plants are thought to be over 1,000 years old.

The port of Ludertiz lies on the park's southern border. Nearby at Aus, a large population of wild horses, descended from domestic animals, survives in the desert.



## WINDHOEK

Windhoek is Namibia's capital city and lies in the heart of the central plateau, surrounded by rolling hills. The city centre is characterized by historic German colonial architecture and modern structures. Dominating the skyline is the German Lutheran church, Christuskirche, a mixture of Art Nouveau and neo-Gothic design and the Titenpalast, or 'Ink Palace', the parliamentary building. The railway station is a Cape Dutch edifice dating back to 1912. The women of the Herero tribe, cattle herders of the region, are very distinctive with their voluminous Victorian-style dresses and colourful headgear.

The German influence is evident in food and locally brewed beer, often served alongside traditional African meals. Windhoek can be hot in summer, November - February but due to its high altitude humidity is low. Winters can be cold at night with some frost in low lying areas.



## SWAKOPMUND

Swakopmund is the premier holiday resort with many intriguing German colonial-style buildings. For those interested in adventure activities Swakopmund offers sand boarding, quad biking, dune carting, parachuting, hot air ballooning, shark fishing, deep sea fishing and beach angling to name but a few. For the more sedentary there are restaurants, cafes, art galleries, museums, a snake park and aquarium. Swakopmund also serves as a good starting point for exploring the surrounding desert.

## WATERBERG PLATEAU NATIONAL PARK

The Waterberg Plateau is an ecologically diverse area about 160 km (100 miles) south east of the main entrance to Etosha National Park. Black rhino and buffalo occur in the park as well as numerous antelope species, including klipspringer. Birdlife is good with more than 200 species being recorded, including species that do not occur on the plains that surround the plateau. Two hundred million year old dinosaur tracks can be seen in some of the rocks in the Park. Vast areas of land around the Park are devoted to game ranching and there are a wide range of lodges.



## AI-AIS RICHTERSVELD TRANSFRONTIER NATIONAL PARK

The Fish River Canyon is second in size to only the famous Grand Canyon in the USA. It is about 160 km long and at its deepest point the river is some 550 metres below the surrounding countryside. There are several hiking trails through the canyon.

The region has a variety of wildlife, including gemsbok, springbok and smaller mammals, which have adapted to life in arid zones. Together with Richtersveld across the Gariiep River in South Africa the park forms a massive Transfrontier conservation area. The Gariiep River hosts varied wildlife.



## OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

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