SOUTHERN NAMIBIA

Deep in southern Namibia sprawls one of the greatest natural wonders of Africa. Next to the Grand Canyon in the USA, the majestic Fish River Canyon is the second largest canyon in the world. Stretching for 161 km, the canyon is up to 2.7 km wide with the depth varying from 457 m to 549 m. There is a hiking trail along the bed of the canyon, starting at the main lookout point near Hobas and ending 87 kms later at Ai-Ais, where weary hikers can relax in the thermal baths.

Ai-Ais means “burning hole” or “steaming water”. It refers to the temperature of the hot spring which reaches about 60°C. Ai-Ais, which provides accommodation, camping sites, a swimming pool and thermal baths, is situated 714 km south of Windhoek. The rest camp is open from the second Friday in March to October 31. Ai-Ais was proclaimed as a protected area in 1965, while the Fish River Canyon was added in 1969. The Huns Mountains, with its exciting winter rainfall vegetation, were added to this conservation area in 1988.

Vegetation is mainly limited to the river banks, except for dense growths of reeds and rushes in the river beds. The surrounding area is home to several species of indigenous animals including klipspringer, red rock hare, the Kaokoland ground squirrel and dassie rat. Large yellow-fish and barbel abound in the permanent water pools, affording good fishing.

A relatively new conservation area is the Naute Dam Recreational Resort, south of Keetmanshoop. Proclaimed in 1988, Naute Dam is undeveloped as a game park with no camping or overnight facilities. It is nevertheless popular among water sport enthusiasts and anglers. There are picnic sites for day visitors.

The southern harbour town Lüderitz is surrounded by Diamond Area 1, which is controlled by NAMDEB. This area, to which access is forbidden, is known as the Sperrgebiet (forbidden area). The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is responsible for tourism and law enforcement in the National West Coast Diamond Area. The region is famous for its crayfish and desert roses. The renowned ghost town, Kolmanskop, may be visited by tourists who obtain a permit from NAMDEB.

Visitors to Duwisib Castle are fascinated by the turbulent history of the strange building. The castle was built by Hans-Heinrich von Wolff, who arrived in Namibia with the German Schutztruppe (protection troops) in 1908–1909. The castle and its contents of antique furniture was purchased by the previous administration in 1979.

Duwisib Castle was built by the eccentric German Baron, Hans-Heinrich von Wolff, in 1908-1909. The castle and its contents of antique furniture was purchased by the previous administration in 1979.
NAMIBIA’S GAME PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

1904. The young soldier married a wealthy American heiress and the couple bought the farm Duwisib in 1907. Von Wolff set about building his castle home with artisans from Europe and masons from Italy cutting the building stone from local quarries. Three carpenters from Denmark, Ireland and Sweden arrived to create the neo-romantic Wilhelminic style of the castle. All the timber and iron used in the construction were imported from Europe.

After landing in Lüderitz, materials were transported 640 km to the farm using about 20 ox-wagons during a two-year period. The majestic 22-roomed castle was completed in 1909 and furnished with antique furniture, works of art, etchings and family portraits. After spending five happy years at Duwisib, the Von Wolff couple travelled to Brazil to buy stud-horses for their farm. During their sea voyage, the couple learned of the outbreak of World War I. Being a soldier, Von Wolff was determined to fight for his native land and the couple returned to Germany. Von Wolff was killed in action at Somme, France, in 1916. Jahta Von Wolff never returned to Duwisib and the farm was sold. It was acquired by the then Directorate of Nature Conservation and Resorts in 1979.

There are overnight camping facilities at Duwisib Castle. Most of the original furniture has been restored and the castle was officially reopened to the public in 1993.

Hardap is well known for the huge artificial dam built here in the 1960s. Yet the game park surrounding the dam is seldom visited by tourists, even though it offers the best game-viewing in southern Namibia. Four black rhinoceroses were relocated here in an effort to spread the gene-pool and distribution of these animals in Namibia. The occasional leopard may be glimpsed in denser vegetation. More commonly sighted animals include Hartmann’s zebra, kudu, oryx, springbok, eland, red hartebeest and steenbok. Hardap with more than 800 pelicans has one of the country’s three largest pelican populations. Fish Eagles are common here, while Pelican, Greater Flamingo, African Spoonbill, Goliath Heron and cormorant quietly feed in the silent waters.

The rest camp, which is 24 km from Mariental, is situated on the banks of the dam. Angling and boating takes place on Namibia’s largest dam. Alternatively, visitors can embark on either a nine kilometre or 15 km walking trails. Bungalows, dormitories and rooms overlook the dam. The camp offers a camping ground, caravan park, picnic sites, boat houses, a swimming pool, tennis court and restaurant.

DESSERT RETREATS

The Namib-Naukluft Park with a surface area of 49 768 km² is Namibia’s largest game reserve. Part of the park was proclaimed in 1907. In 1979 the Naukluft Mountains and a section of Diamond Area 2 were added, while the rest of Diamond Area 2 was added in 1986.

The Namib is one of the oldest deserts, with some of the highest sand dunes in the world located at Sossusvlei. After Etosha, Sossusvlei is the most popular tourist destination in Namibia. It is a large, shallow pan which in years of good rain fills with water. Sossusvlei is about 63 km from the Sesriem camping grounds.

The Naukluft Mountains, about 120 km from Sesriem, offer deep, cool pools, high rock walls and large trees in sharp contrast to the barrenness of the adjoining desert. Game commonly seen in this area includes kudu, springbok and Hartmann’s zebra. A large variety of bird species is found here. One of southern Africa’s toughest self-guided walking trails meanders through this area, taking hikers eight days to complete. Limited camping is available at Naukluft.

Three desert landscapes meet in the northern section of this park – the dunes, the gravel plains and the dry river beds. Also to be seen here is the magnificent Kuiseb Canyon. Another attraction is the Welwitschia mirabilis, one of the most unusual plants in the world.

Situated in the mist belt, numerous species of Namib lichens can be viewed en route to the giant Welwitschia, which is thought to be more than 1 500 years old. Visitors need a permit to camp at demarcated camp sites.

Precipitation in the Namib varies from 15 mm to 100 mm annually and is highly irregular. Nearer to the coast, it is often misty and cool in the evenings. Various perennial springs are found in this region. The hot desert climate is moderated by the cold sea current off the coast.

The coastal region south of Swakopmund, including Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour, offers sanctuary to hundreds of
The endemic Damara Tern is Namibia's smallest seabird. It nests on the bare ground, where its single egg is vulnerable to destruction by off-road vehicles.

A lone brown hyena scavenges for dead seals, seabirds and fish along the desolate Skeleton Coast. These nocturnal animals rest in dens during the day.

Black-backed jackals are common along the Namib coast. The seals in the background seem nervous for the safety of their newborn young – some of which may fall prey to patrolling jackals and brown hyenas.

The Skeleton Coast is littered with whalebones, shipwrecks and the remains of sailors and explorers.

This series of photographs shows the natural changes which have occurred in the northern section of Sandwich Harbour. The first picture taken in 1975 shows an extensive wetland of swampy vegetation and water channels. Photo 2 (1990) reveals a vastly reduced wetland and the sand-spit virtually separating the lagoon from the ocean. By August 1992 (photo 3), the vegetation had almost disappeared and the sand-spit had joined onto the dunes.
thousands of wading birds. Oryx, ostrich, springbok and Hartmann’s zebra are common on the plains of the northern Namib.

Travelling northwards along the coast, the West Coast Recreational Area attracts anglers hoping to bag kabeljou (cob), blacktail, giljoen and steenbras. The area extends from the Swakop River to Ugabmund. There are four camping areas along the coast: Mile 14, Jakkalsputz, Mile 72 and Mile 108.

Extensive lichen fields are situated north of Wlotzkaebaken. The area also incorporates the Cape Cross Seal Reserve. There is a rich variety of waders in the area, while seabirds include the rare Damara Tern which breeds in this area during the summer months.

At Cape Cross visitors have a close view of one of the largest breeding colonies of Cape fur seals in the world. Seal bulls can weigh up to 360 kg while the cows have an average weight of 75 kg. Generally referred to as the start of the Skeleton Coast, the Cape Cross Seal Reserve is situated in the mist zone along the coast. Black-backed jackals are often seen running among the seals. Brown hyaena tracks can also be seen but the animals themselves are shy and nocturnal.

Cape Cross is of interest to historians and biologists alike. Portuguese explorers planted a padrão at Cape Cross in 1486. Towards the end of the last century, Cape Cross boasted more residents than Swakopmund. The guano and salt industries attracted scores of people, while the first railway line in Namibia was built at this remote bay.

The Skeleton Coast Park, about 40 km wide and covering 16 390 km², was proclaimed in 1971. The park in the northern Namib Desert stretches from the Ugab River in the south to the Kunene River, which forms the northern border with Angola. The western boundary is washed by the Atlantic Ocean. While the southern portion of the park is open to visitors, the area north of Terrace Bay is designated as a wilderness area. Several important rivers are found in the park. Hikers can partake in a three-day guided hiking trail along the Ugab River.

The region is generally cold and windy with mist in the mornings and evenings. Differences between maximum and minimum temperatures are slight. Mean temperature for the region is 16.3°C, while annual precipitation averages 17.9 mm.

Namibia’s famed desert dwelling elephants occur in some of the river beds in the park, as well as giraffe, springbok, oryx and brown hyaena. Important plants include lichens and Welwitschia mirabilis.

**WATERBERG PLATEAU PARK**

A three-hour drive from Windhoek brings one to what has been described as one of the best managed parks in Africa. The Waterberg Plateau Park was originally established in
1972 as a refuge for rare species, notably eland. The plateau is 64 km in length and has an average width of 16 km. Historical, biological, geological and archaeological features annually lure thousands of tourists to Waterberg. Among its attractions are sandstone formations, the plateau, the rare Cape Vulture and dinosaur footprints.

A police station built at the turn of the century has been converted into a stylish restaurant at the Bernabé de la Bat Rest Camp. Visitors can book guided hiking trails, or follow several unguided hiking trails on their own. The plateau is dry for most of the year, but there are 15 fountains against the southern slopes. During the rainy season rainwater accumulates in rocky pools lasting until July or August.

The Waterberg Park is dominated by dry, broadleaf woodland and thorn-bush savanna. Namibia's only breeding colony of Cape Vultures is located here. Other birds of note include Bradfield's Hornbill, Mouse-coloured Flycatcher, Hartlaub's Francolin and Alpine Swift, while other animals found here include sable antelope, black and white rhino, tsessebe, roan antelope and dwarf and rock pythons.
NORTHERN RESERVES
Tourism to northeastern Namibia is on the increase. During the War of Liberation, much of the area was controlled by the South African Defence Force and was relatively inaccessible to the public. Since independence in 1990, the area has been termed "Namibia's best kept secret". Vegetation and wildlife differ greatly from the rest of Namibia, and for many tourists, the area offers a true wilderness experience.

Three large omurambas, or vague river courses, dominate one of Namibia's newest parks, Khaudum, which was proclaimed in 1989. Khaudum, next to the Botswana border, is a park for the more adventurous. Regulations require two four-wheel drive vehicles in each party due to the remoteness of this park. Visitors are relatively few, the camps are unfenced, and tourists may leave their vehicles at their own risk. Accommodation consists of two small camps, each with a few bungalows and campsites.

This is the only park which protects the northern Kalahari sandveld. Dominant vegetation in the region is the northern Kalahari dry woodland savanna and dry bushveld grass plains. Game includes elephant, lion,
THREE POPULAR RESORTS

Three resorts are situated within easy reach of Windhoek. Daan Viljoen Game Reserve is popular with picnickers from Windhoek and tourists wanting to escape the bustle of large hotels. About 17 km from Windhoek, it is easily accessible from the capital city. Relatively small in size, the park offers a scenic view of the Khomas Hochland with steep hills, valleys and thorn bushes. Two walking trails have been established in the game park – one of 3 km and one of 9 km – while a 32 km overnight trail is nearing completion. Bungalows are nestled next to the Augeigas Dam, which forms the hub of the rest camp. Daan Viljoen also has a caravan and camping site, picnic area, a restaurant and swimming pool.

Visitors can see red hartebeest, wildebeest, kudu, oryx, springbok, eland and Hartmann’s zebra. The area consists mainly of highland savanna while an aloe endemic to the Khomas Hochland, Aloe viridiflora, is found in this area.

Gross Barmen Hot Springs, a former Rhenish Mission station, is a health and relaxation spa situated about 100 km from Windhoek. The large indoor thermal bath and the private baths are fed by water bubbling from the ground at 65°C which is then cooled to 40°C.

Apart from the thermal baths at Gross Barmen, visitors can also enjoy bird-watching around the reed-fringed dam. Species found here include Red-knobbed Coot, Grey Heron, Purple Gallinule, Lesser Moorhen, Cape Teal and White-backed Duck. Warblers abound in this reserve, where about 150 species of birds have so far been recorded.

Water-ski enthusiasts often frequent Von Bach Recreational Resort. Less than an hour’s drive from Windhoek, the dam offers picnic sites for day visitors and attractive bungalows for overnight tourists. This dam supplies water to Windhoek.

A 4-wheel drive vehicle is needed to negotiate the sandy roads in the Khaudum Game Reserve. For safety reasons, travellers to this remote park must be accompanied by at least one other vehicle.
leopard, cheetah, tsessebe, Cape hunting dog, hyena, reedbuck, roan antelope, giraffe, kudu, oryx and side-stripped jackal.

The call of the Fish Eagle across the tranquil waters of the Okavango River is a sound common to the Mahango Game Reserve. Comprising only 244.6 km², Mahango is a relatively small park. It is reminiscent of Botswana’s swampy game parks. Crocodiles and hippos abound in the river, while bushbuck, reedbuck, lechwe, tsessebe, roan antelope, sable antelope, impala, elephant, buffalo and sitatunga are sometimes seen in the dense riverine forest adjacent to the wooded areas. Mahango is rich in bird life with 280 species having been identified to date. Broad flood plains are flooded every year to form marshes. There are several endemic water plants.

Mahango, which is 950 km from Windhoek and 250 km from Rundu, is open to day visitors only. Accommodation is available at nearby Popa Falls Rest Camp. Here, the course of the river is interrupted by rocks, creating a four-metre high waterfall. Accommodation at the resort consists of rustic bungalows on the river bank with communal kitchen and bathroom facilities. The campsite is surrounded by tall trees.

The West Caprivi Game Reserve lies across the river from Popa Falls. Although it was proclaimed in 1968, the area was controlled by the South African Defence force and until 1990 never really managed as a conservation area.

The 5 715 km² park is home to elephant, side-striped jackal, Cape hunting dog, sable antelope, tsessebe, buffalo, sitatunga, roan antelope, bushbuck, reedbuck and lechwe. No dams or permanent pans exist in this region.

The Mamili National Park is centred at the panhandle of the Okavango swamps, around the Nkasa and Lupa lakes on the Kwando/ Linyanti River. This is the largest conserved wetland area in Namibia.

The surface area of water fluctuates considerably, but about 80 percent of the area is flooded during high floods. Rainfall averages 740 mm a year, although up to 1 000 mm is common. Eastern Caprivi has the highest rainfall in Namibia.

Mamili is a birdwatchers paradise, with more than 400 species having been recorded here. Because of its remoteness, the park is seldom overcrowded. Roads are passable in the dry season while 4 wheel-drive vehicles are essential during the wet season. Campsites consists of clearings.

Namibia’s largest populations of buffalo are found in Mamili, while other species include elephant, hippo, lion, hyena, crocodile, lechwe, impala and the Cape hunting dog. Vegetation is dominated by species associated with flood plains and termittaria.

About 30 km north of this park lies the Mudumu National Park. Covering an area of 1 009.59 km², the park accommodates small numbers of sitatunga and lechwe, while buffalo, hippo, crocodile, elephant, Cape hunting dog, and roan antelope are sometimes seen. Vegetation is dominated by mopane woodlands and camelthorn trees, with dense reed-beds fringing the Kwando River on the western edge of the park. These two national parks are the most recent addition to Namibia’s protected area network, having been proclaimed in 1990.

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* Previous sizes - have been changed through amendments
Source: Ministry of Environment and Tourism - 1995
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