The tourist potential of the Sperrgebiet of the Namib desert, being the area within 100 km of the Atlantic coastline bordered by the 20th parallel in the north and by the Orange River in the South.

Author: Gino Noli
Luederitz
August 1993

Terms of reference

I am a professionally trained fixed-wing and helicopter pilot. While I was the pilot of the Nature Conservation Super Cub spotter plane I spent a total of 1300 hours in the air over Namibia, 300 of which involved aerial census work and radio telemetry tracking over the southern Namib. As a Nature Conservation officer stationed in Luederitz and Aus I did perimeter patrols in the coastal area from Luederitz to Walvis Bay and in the escarpment area from the Haiber Flats to Rosh Pinah. I also did regional patrols on the Haiber Flats throughout the Koichab River System, in the Kowis Mountains, in the Hottentots Bay/Anichab area, and in the region of the Kaukausib waterhole. I took part in game capture operations in the Klinghardt mountains. While I was involved with public relations for CDM I did VIP escorted tours to Atlas Bay, Elizabeth Bay, Pomona and Bogenfels. I spent a total of five years working for Nature Conservation, and five years working for CDM. During these ten years I dealt with literally thousands of tourists and scores of scientists. From 1986 to 1989 I accompanied my brother, Dr. Dieter Noli, on numerous archaeological surveys and excavations in the southern Namib. I am currently operating my own tour company (Kolmanskop Tour Company) in the Sperrgebiet.

Possible tourist routes (see map)

1) The area between the Koichab Pan and the Kowis mountains: This is a very attractive but highly sensitive area, which can be accessed by means of the 4x4 track used by the CDM fishing club to reach Meeb Bay.

2) The Kowis Mountains: These are ideal for 2-3 day hiking trips, striking north from roughly opposite the CDM road near Rotkuppe. The actual mountains provide a very useful navigation aid and shelter, both of which become indispensable in the event of a sudden sandstorm.

3) From Luederitz to Hottentots Bay: This trip is for well-equipped 4x4 parties with experienced drivers. The route from Agate Beach to Anichab has a low sensitivity, but the part between Anichab and Hottentot Bay is characterized by sensitive salty mudflats, narrow growths, damara tern nesting sites, rare black sandroses and a gemsbok population which should not be unduly disturbed. Hottentots Bay forms a possible overnight stop.
4) From Luederitz to Elizabeth Bay, west of the dunes: Kolmanskop Ghost Town, seal colony at Atlas Bay, E-Bay Ghost Town and the modern E-Bay mine. This is a 2x4 route. A water hole for possible game viewing exists in the eastern hinterland of E-Bay. This leg is a 4x4 route.

5) From Luederitz to Aus along the old German wagon trail, via Rotkuppe, Tsaukaib, Letterkuppe and Kubub: 4x4.

6) South along CDM road

   a) East along CDM patrol route, up the Kaukausib river to the Kaukausib Fountain: 4x4 route. Open water at fountain, suitable for game viewing at Gemsbok/Hyena.


   c) From Schwarzer Berg turn-off to Pomona: 17 km of poor, rocky and sandy 4x4 road. Bushman candles at turn-off. Pomona ghost town, graveyard.

   d) Road from Pomona to Bogenfels: Slow picturesque drive on poor 4x4 road. Bogenfels ghost town, photogenic buildings, Bogenfels rock arch, Bogenfels cave.

   e) Return to CDM road. 2x4 when not covered by driftsand.

f) Coastal 2x4 drive from Bogenfels to Bakers Bay. Attractions of this route are sandy beaches with rocky outcrops on them and close proximity to Plum pudding Islands, Black Sophie rock and Sinclair Island. The old miner accommodation at Bakers Bay could be a possible overnight stop.

   g) From Bakers Bay one can either cut back to the CDM road (about 15 km) or

   h) First continue south to Chamaïs Bay and a spectacular wreck before

   i) Heading inland to the Chamaïs checkpoint on the CDM road.

   j) Klinghardt mountains: The "Lost Valley", sometimes populated by hundreds of Gemsbok, could possibly be suitable for difficult and sandy 4x4 game viewing by small parties. It could be developed into a very exclusive night stop, accessed by helicopter or STOL aircraft.

7) Road from Rosh Pinah to Oranjemund: This is a very scenic drive indeed, with the added attraction of watersports and the possibility of Oranjemund itself being developed as a recreation camp.
8) The 4x4 Nature Conservation patrol road from Garub station to Rosh Pinah. The route generally follows the Nature Conservation road and the line of boreholes put down during the emergency grazing period.

The main attractions

The Sperrgebiet has, from the point of view of the tourist, three main attractions:

i) The photogenic beauty and splendor of the terrain, its biology and geology, combined with isolation, desolation, the ultimate in wide-open spaces, and the very fact that access has to date been denied.

ii) The romance and history of diamond mining with all its technical, political and personal details, spanning the whole spectrum from the decaying splendor of Kolmanskop to the modern plant at Elizabeth Bay.

iii) The untold story of the first inhabitants of the Sperrgebiet, the desert Bushmen, whose many campsites contain a veritable treasure house of archaeological clues in the form of stone tools, ostrich eggshell beads, paintings and potsherds.

Possible types of tourist activity

The very nature of these attractions rules out the concept of large groups of unescorted tourists roaming around at will. Most of the Sperrgebiet is currently pristine, the main exceptions being the coastal strip which has been mined and the Nature Conservation patrol track and the old emergency grazing areas along the escarpment. A very conservative approach is advised in opening up the untouched area, as most of it has not yet even been subjected to baseline scientific research. Initially, at any rate, tourism should largely be restricted to those areas which have already been disturbed. It would also be advisable to initially make use of the services of small, controllable operators. Big operators tend to have the financial and political leverage to steamroll, bypass and ignore any conservation-orientated objections to their way of doing things. They also have very high overheads and therefore need to have a large turnover to make ends meet. A large turnover is the last thing the desert needs. Even so, there are at least nine possible types of tourist activities which can be considered.

i) Large scale (100+ people per day) visits by tour buses and/or private vehicles: Only in the case of the Kolmanskop ghost town, which is directly next to a public road, should large scale visits be tolerated in the Sperrgebiet. Even there, however, only guided viewing should be allowed, as is currently the case.

ii) Medium scale (about 30 people per day) visits by tour busses and/or private vehicles: Single buses with a guide on board and small groups of private vehicles accompanied by a guide could be allowed to visit the seals at Atlas Bay, the E-Bay ghost town and the new E-Bay
mine. A further possibility for such visits may be Bogenfels, but the current road would first have to be extensively upgraded and then subjected to constant maintenance.

iii) Small scale specialist tours: The other attractions and routes are all ideal for safaris by small, expertly guided groups of people in a limited number of light 4x4 vehicles. Ideally no group should contain more than four vehicles and fifteen people. Larger numbers would make it difficult to maintain proper track discipline and would ruin the exclusive nature of the experience. It has to be stressed that in order to be able to market most of the Sperrgebiet as the only unspoiled desert of the world, it has to remain unspoiled. Consequently access to most of it has to be severely restricted, with the quality rather than the quantity of the tourist activities being emphasised in these areas. The guides, therefore, would have to be experts in their fields (e.g. archaeology, geology, botany, biology, paleontology) with highly developed practical, social, and, if possible, academic skills. The result would be truly specialised expeditions, for which the tourist would be prepared to pay the required premium. At the same time, the rather stiff price of such tours would be very effective at keeping away the wrong sort of customer.

iv) 4x4 adventure route: The needs of the "wrong sort of customer" (Paris to Dakar fans, would-be Camel men) could, however, also be accommodated by establishing a 4x4 adventure route in a linear sacrifice area. Ideally this would lie along the course of the current Nature Conservation road along the escarpment fence, on the eastern Sperrgebiet boundary, from Garub to Rosh Pinah. This area has been subjected to quite a large amount of vehicle damage during emergency grazing in the early eighties, the recent construction of the fence, and also as the result of countless vehicle patrols by Nature Conservation. At the same time it covers the whole gamut of available desert terrains, and provides for extremely varied and highly "interesting" off-road driving. The escarpment farms could benefit from the exercise by setting up rest camps for the travellers, and part of the route could detour into far-inlands where this is acceptable to all parties concerned. A highly experienced guide would lead the way in a suitably exciting manner in a 4x4, to provide a low-risk adventure.

v) Regional sacrifice area: Similarly, it may be advisable to establish a regional sacrifice area in the dunefield between the Luederitz airfield and the Kowis mountains. Such an area, however, would have to be fenced in, preferably with coiled razor tape weighed down with old tires. There would also have to be a gate manned by a nature conservation official who would both collect an entrance fee and make certain that all vehicles have left again by sunset. A deposit system could be used to ensure that people leave on time via the correct exit. This would be the only part of the Sperrgebiet where unsupervised access would be condoned.

vi) Aerial and fly-in Safaris: These would be of two basic types. The first would be modeled on the example set by Lou Schoeman, where
tourists are flown into a temporarily established camp, from where either vehicle-born or hiking activities are then conducted. The second would be the case of where the actual flight is the tour. The advantages of these activities are their low environmental impact, and the fact that they provide quick access for tourists with limited time. The aircraft also provide an excellent vantage point for viewing the desert. Some of the phenomena, in fact, such as the Rotervann, can only be appreciated from the air. The disadvantages include the possibility of disturbing game by flying too close to it at a low level, thus panicking them into injuring themselves. A further consideration is the fact that the presence of aircraft could detract from the sense of isolation experienced by other tourists who are strolling it out on the ground. Adverse weather can result in poor flying conditions, with cancellation costs resulting in price escalations. In addition, only the use of highly experienced Bush Pilots would ensure the safety of both the game and the passengers.

Several types of aircraft would be suitable, but STOL fixed-wing options (e.g. turbo Pilatus Porter) or helicopters (e.g. Bell Jet Long Ranger) would be preferred. Unfortunately these are rather expensive to purchase, operate and maintain. The prevailing winds rule out the possibility of hot-air ballooning, but a small airship operating from Aus along the escarpment would be possible. The initial purchasing costs, however, as well as the need for constructing a storage hanger, could prove to be prohibitively expensive. All aircraft would have to operate according to strict route and altitude restrictions in order to avoid clashes with ground parties and to avoid upsetting game. The advent of GPS, however, makes it possible to accurately demarcate low level routes.

vii) Canoeing. The lower reaches of the Orange River are very good for canoeing. Current canoe operators could easily extend their activities to the bridge at Oranjemund – beyond it lies a bird sanctuary which must not be entered.

viii) Pony trekking: The area around Garub is demonstrably suitable for horses. Pony trekking in this area (possibly along the old Kubub – Rotkuppe route) would leave no additional tracks, and would capitalize on the already existing romance of the wild horses and provide additional income for the escarpment farmers.

ix) Caravanning: Currently the only decent caravan park in the vicinity of the Sperrgebiet is the one on Shark Island, at Luederitz. It has fantastic facilities, and the currently lax security could easily be improved upon by closing the camp to day visitors. Many caravanners, however, are discouraged by the lack of a fully tarred approach to Luederitz, which will soon be rectified. Oranjemund would also be an excellent caravanning destination, but can currently only be approached on tar from Port Nolloth, a route earmarked for border closure at the end of 1993.

x) Train trips: Several successful special tourist trains have been laid on to Luederitz in the past. The commercial underutilization of the line from Luederitz to Keetmanshoop means that there is lots of
room for the expansion of this kind of activity. It may even be worthwhile to investigate the possibility of catering for enthusiasts by having a steam locomotive running regularly on the same line or just on the section from Luederitz to Aus.

Areas not suitable for tourist activities

The power line from Rosh Pinah to Luederitz cuts diagonally across the desert, and in theory offers a very safe tourist route along which it would not be possible to get lost. It is also possible to negotiate most of this route in 2-wheel drive. Where it crosses the gravel plains, however, it is subject to severe corrugations. This phenomena encourages people to drive next to the track until, like at Sossus vlei, the original track is eventually replaced by a wide swath of destruction. In addition, it would be adverse to the image of the Namib which we are trying to create to have modern high tension wires as constant tourist companions.

South of the power line the desert should in any event not be used: First there come a track sensitive combination of red dunes and gravel plains. Then the Klinghardt Mountains, which are surrounded by boulder plains very similar to those of the north-eastern Haiber Flats. They are notoriously difficult and cumbersome to negotiate by vehicle. South of the Klinghardt Mountains there are vegetated dunefields in which driving is extremely difficult, uncomfortable and harmful to the vegetation. This area also forms a retreat for the desert gemsbok. There is no viable vehicle access to the Roter Kamm from the coast. Besides, there is nothing to see from the ground, merely a dune of soft red sand going around in a circle. As one goes further south there are larger and sparsely vegetated dunes. As Oranjemund is approached there are rocky outcrops and hills with succulent vegetation, all of which are best left alone.

The private CDM road from Luederitz to Oranjemund does have the attraction of being able to offer the tourist a different route out of Luederitz as well as the possibility of overnight facilities at Oranjemund. Except for the first third of this road, however, it is visually incredibly boring, with long, straight stretches to encourage speeding. The fact that the game from the Klinghardt Mountains tends to migrate over this route would lead to a large amount of road kills if the route is not closed after dark. The threat of roadside pollution, offroad driving and poaching would in any event rule out unaccompanied vehicles. In the long run it would be better not to open the CDM road to the general public, as it would make the environmentally fragile southern interior of the Sperrgebiet far too accessible.

Tourist patterns of the past and their possible implications.

Kolmanskop is the only tourist attraction in the area for which any figures of tourist activities could be obtained. The amount of total visitors for the last five years are as follows:
1988: 18 098 (Diaz festival)  
1989: 15 287  
1990: 9 258 (Independence)  
1991: 10 425  
1992: 11 784

The Diaz festival was accompanied by a massive promotion of the occasion in Namibia, South Africa and Portugal, so the comparatively large amount of visitors was to be expected. 1989 was probably a more or less "normal" year, with the possibility of slightly inflated figures due to the "last chance to see" syndrome and the arrival of 4000 UNTAG personnel. There were very few visitors in 1990, in spite of the attention of the whole world and the presence of UNTAG. This in all likelihood reflects a total lack of confidence on the part of potential tourists in the ability of the new government to ensure their personal safety. The steady increase since then would appear to suggest that these tourists are slowly coming to the conclusion that their fears were unwarranted, and are now beginning to visit Namibia again.

A detailed month by month breakdown of who exactly the Kolmanskop tourists were in 1992 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Namibian</th>
<th>RSA</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul</td>
<td>2177</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1488</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep</td>
<td>1030</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11784</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>3891</td>
<td>4953</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures show that German tourists account for 42% of all visitors, making them the single most important group. It also has to be noted that their numbers are spread fairly evenly throughout the year, the most visitors coming in April (the best time of the year in Luederitz) and from July to November (summer to autumn in Europe). The low numbers in June can be attributed to the quiet before the (European) summer vacation storm. The low numbers in December can be attributed to the fact that, traditionally, Germans prefer to be at
Considering the German character of Luederitz, the ghost towns and the original diamond mining industry, the large amount of German visitors is not surprising. Namibia, after all, was the only German colony which ever was a roaring financial success, and the Germans view the Sperrgebiet and its poignant remains of the economic heart of this colony with great pride. Due to the strength of the Mark and the weakness of the Rand, Namibia is also a very affordable destination for Germans.

The German tourist, however, has very high standards as far as organisation and accommodation are concerned. This taxes the abilities of the providers of local services. The Germans are also keen on being subjected to great amounts of information, which had better be accurate. This keeps tour guides on their toes. As far as the desert itself is concerned, such a visitor is the perfect tourist. He is highly disciplined, fully aware of the importance of conservation, would not dream of vandalism, littering or poaching, and does not arrive in his own 4x4, wishing to go powering through the barren wastes. He also prefers individual attention rather than the mayhem of mass tourism. He basically likes his privacy and, coming from Europe, expects to pay handsomely for it. The German market, therefore is ideal for small-scale specialist tours and fly-in safaris.

The second most important group, the South Africans, account for 33% of all visitors, their numbers forming incredibly conspicuous peaks during Easter (the best time of the year in Luederitz) and especially during the July school holidays (best time of the year to travel in Namibia by car). Considering the proximity of South Africa and its historical links to Namibia, this is not surprising.

The majority of South African tourists are not only environmentally aware, but more adventurous, capable and experienced than their German counterparts when it comes to "roughing it". They are the kind of tourists with whom one can canoe down the Orange River, pony-trek through the most impossible terrain and hike the most challenging routes. Another useful group are the dedicated caravanners. They travel in small groups and are generally extremely enthusiastic and well organized. They do, however, require a tarred approach road and decent and secure camping facilities.

A minority of the South African tourists are unfortunately less environment-friendly, less disciplined, more gregarious, not all that keen on information and accustomed to lower standards. They also often tend to be accompanied by marginally controlled children. Consequently, while they may bring in money, they are not necessarily the desert's best friend. They come to the desert for its proximity to home, rather than for its natural attractions. This soon turns them into bored thrill-seekers who need to be both entertained and controlled to prevent them from spoiling the desert for others. While they are a very small minority, one must keep them in mind. It would be advisable to provide entertainment for such tourists in areas where the damage they may do is limited. They are in fact ideal candidates
for 4x4 adventure routes and for turning loose in regional sacrifice areas.

Most of remaining 25% of the total amount of visitors (Namibians, English, French, Italian and others) seem to have a preference for visiting Luederitz in August.

Current and possible future trends

Compared to 1992 the number of South African visitors for the months of January through July in 1993 dropped by 20.5%. The figure for July (normally the best month) was a full 40% down on that of the previous year. Considering the worsening political situation in South Africa, this was to be expected. During the same time period (Feb-Jul), the number of German visitors decreased by only 2.2% This would appear to suggest that Germany is a dependable source of tourists, no matter what the political situation in Southern Africa happens to be.

The completion of the tarring of the last remaining stretch of gravel road between Luederitz and Keetmanshoop in 1994 is likely to lead to an increase in the amount of tourists willing to embark upon the trip. Prime candidates would be those with caravans and more expensive cars. The stabilization of the political situation in South Africa after majority rule has settled in will eventually lead to improved tourism for the whole region. Initial concern about the outcome of the elections and the nature of the transition may, however, keep the South Africans at home for a while, especially in 1994.

As far as world trends are concerned, the latest buzzword in tourism is ECO TOURISM. The judicious use of small-scale specialist tours in the Sperrgebiet would be the ultimate in ecotourism, making Namibia a world leader in that field.

Financial viability and infrastructure

The tourist operation at Kolmanskop currently breaks even at about 1000 visitors per month (the 1992 average). This is due to fixed costs determined by the fact that the tours have to be offered six days a week in both German and English, necessitating the availability of two tour guides at all times, even for very small groups. A caretaker also has to be employed to keep the restored buildings and the restrooms spotless. In its present configuration Kolmanskop could, however, easily receive 2 000 visitors a month. In July 1988, at the height of the Diaz Festival, a single guide giving up to seven bi-lingual tours a day managed to cope with 4000 visitors. Pilot studies of small scale specialist tours by the Kolmanskop Tour Company have indicated that they could be both very popular and reasonably profitable, being less susceptible to seasonal fluctuations.

In spite of the fact that Luederitz is supposed to be a mining and fishing center, the economy of the town also benefits enormously from
tourism. From June to July 1992 the monthly turnover of SPAR, the largest food retailer in Luederitz, increased by 14% in response to the influx of 1565 additional visitors. From June to July 1993 the turnover increase was 21% for only 935 additional visitors. As far as the overall picture is concerned, there can be no doubt that the Sperrgebiet will be able to play an important role in attracting tourists to both the South and to Namibia as a whole.

The existing infrastructure in Luederitz is reasonably adequate as far as transport is concerned: It has an underutilized railway, a sheltered harbor suitable for yachts and small cruise ships, and a tarred airstrip which could easily be upgraded by being provided with a flare-path and a control tower. The completion of the tarring of the last section of gravel on the road to Keetmanshoop in 1994 will vastly improve the viability of approaching Luederitz by road. Combined with air links to both Cape Town (via Oranjemund) and Windhoek (via Walvis Bay) this means that Luederitz, in spite of being "in the middle of nowhere" is actually highly accessible.

Accommodation, however, is a bit of a problem, as both the quantity (about 200) and the quality of the beds available leaves much to be desired. According to the people in the Hotel business, the short high seasons (April and July) make it uneconomical to provide extra beds, as these would just stand empty for most of the year. It follows that, with the current infrastructure, Luederitz is better suited to small-scale specialist tours throughout the year than to mass tourism during the peak periods. The swing to mass tourism would only be viable if the seasonal fluctuations could be levelled out considerably.

Archaeology

The desert, its geology, its plants, its animals and its historic ruins are there for all to see, but the BUSHMEN who once inhabited this majestic terrain are now gone. An archaeologist can bring the old desert dwellers "back to life" for the tourists, thus adding the HUMAN dimension to the desert. As demonstrated elsewhere (Greece, Egypt, South America) Archaeology can be of great interest to tourists. Dr. Dieter Noli is the only archaeologist who has researched the Southern Namib in the last ten years. According to him the prehistory of the Sperrgebiet, highlighting as it does the harmony between early man and the harsh desert environment, forms an indispensable part of any effort at high-quality ecotourism. Any environmentally aware tourist would want to know the details of the low-impact utilization of the terrain by its original inhabitants.

It also has to be remembered that a camping site which was ideal thousands of years ago (availability of water, fuel and shelter), would still be good today. The same applies to good routes (easy gradients, availability of camping sites en route). Consequently modern desert travellers will often select the same camping sites and the same routes as their prehistoric predecessors. This means that all prospective routes and camping sites of specialist desert tours
have to be carefully vetted by an experienced desert archaeologist. Ideally, however, he should actually accompany the tours as a specialist guide. In his three-year study of the Koichab River Valley Dr. Noli found that many of the archaeological sites he located were marked on the old German maps as permanent or temporary water holes. He also found that several of the routes utilized by the Germans had been popular with the region's prehistoric inhabitants. This is not all that surprising, since the Germans prospectors initially used "tame" Bushmen as scouts.

Archaeologically, what the Sperrgebiet really needs is the long-term, full-time attention of an experienced desert archaeologist with the brief of conducting a base-line survey of the entire area. He would have to be fluent in German, as only that will enable him to benefit fully from the wealth of colonial German literature and maps. It would also enable him to pass on his findings in a popular form to the modern German tourists, thus enabling him to be employed by the tourist industry.

Conclusions

It would be best for the desert, the tourists and the tour operators to mainly conduct small-scale specialist tours in the interior of the Sperrgebiet. The target market for such tours would largely consist of Germans. They are already the single most numerous group of visitors, and have a vested national and cultural interest in the Sperrgebiet and its past. It is therefore important to preserve the region's colonial German heritage, and to enhance the quality of small-scale specialist tours. Part of this effort should be in the form of on-going baseline scientific studies, notably in the field of historical and prehistoric archaeology. A certain amount of mass tourism is also called for, but this should be limited to those areas of the Sperrgebiet which have already been disturbed. Every effort should be made to keep the unspoiled part of the desert as unspoiled as it is, as that is its greatest attraction. I would like to repeat that: EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO KEEP THE UNSPOILED PART OF THE DESERT AS UNSPOILED AS IT IS, AS THAT IS ITS GREATEST ATTRACTION.