



Welcome to Namibia

"I will never forget the bonds I formed with these amazing creatures. Having the opportunity to protect and care for lions and cheetahs in the Kalahari Desert was an opportunity beyond my wildest dreams."

Namibia lies on the west coast of sub-Saharan Africa, to the northwest of South Africa. Sparsely populated, it is an explorer's heaven, full of untamed landscapes and thrilling adventures. With everything from tropical forests along the rivers to the vast expanse of the deserts, its plant life and wildlife are tremendously varied, with elephants, cheetahs, mongoose, jackals, meerkats and over twenty species of antelope all calling this magnificent land home. Namibia's culture is just as impressive as its landscapes; having experienced a diverse mix of peoples and visitors, Namibia is a place where Oshiwambo, English, German, Afrikaans, and Portuguese are all spoken. Its recent independence from South Africa, its wealth of natural resources, mixed cultures and impressive wildlife all make Namibia an exciting, untouched paradise for you to enjoy.

Know your History

Thought by some to be the genetic parents of all modern races, the Bushmen are one of the oldest peoples in the world and were the earliest inhabitants of this region. They were skilled hunter gatherers with an advanced early culture and a nomadic lifestyle which allowed them to spread across modern day Namibia, as well as Botswana and South Africa.

Early settlers

Up until 2,000 years ago, these hunter gatherers were the only inhabitants of Namibia, living on a diet of berries, nuts, roots and the occasional antelope. Around this time some groups of the Bushmen started to acquire livestock as they migrated further north and their hunting and gathering gave way to herding. They developed solid community structures and distinct characteristics and became known as the Khoikhoi, or Nama, being the second group to inhabit Namibia. The Nama settled around the ancient Orange River which lies along the southern border with South Africa and maintained a pastoral way of life for thousands of years, tending flocks of goats and sheep, gathering firewood and collecting wild honey. Following the Nama, another Khoisan group, the Damara, entered Namibia in the 9th century, settling in the grasslands of central Namibia, which provided plentiful grazing opportunities.

The Bantu

The Bantu people, who stretch across central and southern Africa, migrated into southern Africa from the Niger Delta around 2,000 years ago. They not only had domestic animals but also practised

agriculture, farming and skilled ironworks and lived in settled villages. The first Bantu groups to live in Namibia (Ovambo and Kavango) arrived in the 14th century, settling in the north along the border with Angola, where the rich and fertile soil suited their farming way of life. Today, the Ovambo make up around half of the Namibian population.

During the 17th century, the Herero, another Bantu-speaking group, migrated to Namibia from the east African lakes, establishing themselves as pastoral herdsmen. As they pushed southwards towards the central grasslands, they were soon met by armed Boers, known as the Oorlans, who were migrating from South Africa in search of better grazing lands. Warfare soon broke out between the two groups and the original inhabitants, the Nama and Damara, found themselves caught up in the dispute. Although many of the Damara were displaced the Nama eventually intermingled with the Boers, giving rise to central Namibia's Baster population.

European settlement & German occupation

The first Europeans, the Portuguese, to set foot on Namibian soil never penetrated far into the country, put off by the inhospitable Namib desert, and it was not until the 19th century, when European powers sought to carve up the African continent between them in the so called "Scramble for Africa", that Europeans – Germany and Great Britain in the forefront – became interested in Namibia.

The first territorial claim on a part of Namibia came in 1878, when the British annexed Walvis Bay. Soon after a German trader, Adolf Lüderitz, bought Angra Pequeña from the Nama chief Joseph Fredericks and, fearing that the British would seek to control the area, he advised the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck to claim it. This led to the establishment of "German South West Africa" as a colony in 1884.

Following the discovery of diamonds in 1903, and because Namibia was the only German colony considered suitable for white settlement at the time, a large influx of German settlers were attracted to the area. Forced labour and the dispersion of native tribes by the German settlers resulted in conflicts, culminating in the Herero and Namaqua wars of 1904–1908. With good knowledge of the terrain the indigenous tribes had little difficulty in defending themselves against the Schutztruppe, until the Battle of Waterberg, when Germany sent 14,000 additional troops, and the Herero people, denied citizenship rights, were forced into the western Kalahari desert, where many died of thirst. As the German forces, who had been ordered to shoot any Herero on sight, guarded every water source, the tragic death of 80% of the Herero population and 50% of the Nama people followed, which is known as the Herero Genocide.

South African occupation

Namibia was soon to go through further occupation as South Africa, a member of the British Commonwealth, undertook administration of the German colony, acquiring full legislation over the territory. During the 1960s the European powers began to grant independence to their colonies and trust territories in Africa and international pressure soon mounted on South Africa to do the same in Namibia. Simultaneously, the Marxist South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) began guerrilla attacks on South Africa, establishing bases in the southern part of the country.

These events would be the first in Namibia's slow transition to independence. Soon after SWAPO's attacks the UN Security Council, which included the US, the UK, Canada, France and West Germany, began to push for a solution to South Africa's rule of Namibia. In 1978 after lengthy consultations with South Africa, the front line states, comprising Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, together with SWAPO and UN officials, set up a UN plan with the aim of bringing an internationally acceptable transition to independence in Namibia.

Independence

For the next 20 years the UN appointed seven commissioners for Namibia all of which South Africa refused to recognise. A US mediation team stepped in, interested in restraining Soviet-Cuban influence in Angola, and brought negotiators from Angola, Cuba, South Africa and observers from the Soviet Union. After a period of intense diplomatic manoeuvring, the Brazzaville Protocol was set up, stating that Cuban troops would be withdrawn from Angola and Soviet military aid would cease as soon as South Africa withdrew from Namibia.

Although implementation officially started on 1st April 1989, it was not until November that a turbulent and violent transitional period finally ended and South Africa withdrew all its forces from Namibia. A staggering 98% of registered voters turned out to elect members of the constituent assembly, which would form the first government of Namibia's independence. SWAPO took a majority of the vote in elections certified free and fair by the UN commissioner and a new constitution was drawn up by February 1990.

Namibia was officially declared independent on 21st March 1990 and SWAPO have been in government ever since. Sam Nujoma was president for the first 14 years of independence and in 2004 Hifikepunye Pohamba was elected as his replacement. Elections have been held every five years since, with Pohamba so far remaining in power. Although the government has been accused of hypocrisy and controversial land reform policies Namibia has clearly progressed since its apartheid years and a strong constitution highlighting equality and human rights looks set to improve the lives of Namibia's impoverished indigenous communities.

Money Talks

Namibia's economy is heavily reliant on its mining exports – taxes and royalties from mining make up 25% of its revenue – and it is a primary source of gem quality diamonds the world over. However, the mining sector, which, other than diamonds, includes uranium, lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten, only employs around 3% of Namibia's population whilst around half depends on subsistence agriculture.

Namibia's economy is closely linked to South Africa – the bulk of Namibia's imports (90%) come from there and the majority of its exports leave through South Africa.

With the privatisation of several enterprises in the next few years, it is hoped that long term foreign investment will be encouraged to invest in Namibia but many politicians are reluctant to advance the issue because of opposition by the trade union movement. The majority of Namibia's wealth comes from its modern market sector followed by its traditional subsistence sector. Despite the majority of the population's being taken up with subsistence farming and herding, the country has around 200,000 skilled workers and a small, well-trained professional and managerial class. The economy of the country is based on capital intensive industry and farming, but it's heavily dependent on the earnings generated from exports such as diamonds, livestock and fish.

Exports

As a result of many drought years, food shortages are major problems in rural areas and around 50% of all of Namibia's cereal (wheat etc.) requirements are imports. Since its independence the Namibian government has run free market economic principles that are designed to promote commercial development and job creation, hoping to bring disadvantaged Namibians into the "economic mainstream". As a result of this aim, the government actively courts donor assistance and foreign investment, becoming a leading advocate of regional economic integration, thanks to its

favourable location and ideal transport and communications base.

The majority of Namibia's exports are diamonds and other minerals, fish, beef and other meat products and karakul sheep pelts. The country is trying to diversify its trading relationships away from its reliance on South Africa and boost its trade with Europe (fish and meat markets are booming) and the country has purchased heavy equipment and machinery from Germany, the UK, the US, and Canada to improve its mineral production.

Money

ATM machines are present in Windhoek and withdrawals may have a small surplus charge although this is likely to be similar to traveller's cheque commission rates. Credit and debit cards (MasterCard and Visa) are accepted for cash withdrawal at most banks but rarely for general payments. However, a credit card will come in useful in the event of an emergency. The local currency is the Namibian dollar (NAD), in use since 1993. The Namibian dollar is pegged to the South African rand at a rate of 1:1 and the country's economy is closely linked to South Africa.

Get Culture Savvy

Namibia's culture is rich in diversity, with a variety of ethnic groups and tribes having immigrated to southern Africa over thousands of years. As well as Namibia's many indigenous cultures, a high number of Europeans populate this sparse land, as a result of which Namibia's culture is a patchwork of different influences, languages and beliefs.

Bushmen

The Bushmen were probably the first people to migrate to the southern tip of the African continent and are one of the oldest cultures continually existing in the world. These skilled hunter gatherers are thought to be a "genetic Adam", from which all the world's ethnic groups can ultimately trace their heritage. As a result of the great respect the Bushmen had for the land their lifestyles resulted in little environmental impact and minimal archaeological evidence. However, a high density of striking rock paintings have been found, the most famous in Namibia dating back at least 25,000 years in the Apollo 11 Cave.

Today the Bushmen are an indigenous population of the Kalahari Desert, which spans South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, as well as southern Angola. The traditional hunter gatherer lifestyle has been largely replaced with farming activities since the mid-20th century. Although faced with the expansion of populations into their territory, tenuous land control and the destruction of vital water pumps by elephants, this intriguing culture has existed for thousands of years and continues to survive in modern day Namibia, with around 27,000 present inhabitants.

Nama

Another indigenous culture which continues to prosper in Namibia is that of the Nama people. Originally from the Orange River in southern Namibia and northern South Africa the Nama are a pastoral people and practise a policy of communal land ownership, living in portable huts (haruoms) which enable them to migrate as grazing lands become scarce. Traditional music, folk tales, proverbs and praise poetry have been handed down for many generations and are a key aspect of the Nama culture. In addition to the famous musical and literary abilities of the Nama traditional craftwork is practised with immense skill, such as leatherwork and jewellery making. The Nama language is the most widely spread Khoisan language with a quarter of a million speakers in the

modern world.

Ovambo

The greatest population in Namibia, however, is made up of the Ovambo, who belong to the large Bantu family. Belief in spirits and superstitions greatly shapes the daily life of the Ovambo. In particular, Kalunga, a supreme spirit who lives amongst the Ovambo people, is central to tribal life, helping to protect the people from famine and pestilence. These traditional beliefs are still strong amongst the Ovambo, but have been fused with influences from Christian missionaries. Today most of the Ovambo consider themselves Lutheran and practise a combination of traditional and Christian beliefs.

Conservation

Namibia is the only country in the world specifically to address conservation in its constitution. It states that: "The State shall actively promote and maintain the welfare of the people by adopting international policies aimed at the following: maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and the biological diversity of Namibia and utilisation of living natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future."

Sport

Namibia's most popular sport is football and the national team often qualifies for the Africa Cup of Nations. Other sports include rugby union – the national team has competed in the Rugby World Cup – and cricket. In the sporting world, Namibia is best known for being home to the toughest foot race in the world, the Namibian ultra marathon. Equivalent to three marathons, the race is run across 126 km of the Namib Desert and racers must also carry their own equipment such as food, water and GPS. Perhaps Namibia's most famous sporting hero is Frankie Fredericks, the 100 m and 200 m sprinter who won three silver Olympic medals and is also known for his humanitarian work.

Religion

Roughly 90% of Namibia's population is Christian and around 50% of these are Lutheran. At least 10% of the population retain indigenous beliefs and 3% follow Islam. Christianity was introduced in the 1800s by missionaries, converting much of the population.

Food

Most Namibian food is a rich blend of German and South African influences. More popular dishes are game – springbok, kudu and gemsbok – and zebra and ostrich are also local delicacies. Staple diets tend to be sausages and processed meats, brotchen and landjager, porridge and soup made from cornmeal and millets. German inspired bread, cakes and pastries are also popular. Many of the Namibian delicacies are popular across southern Africa but each country has its own take on them; Namibia's most popular specialities are: rauchfleisch (smoked meat), biltong (air-dried meat, also popular in South Africa), potjiekos (one-pot bush stew, often made with game meat) and seafood (mostly oysters).

Holidays

1st January New Years Day
 21st March Independence Day
 1st May May Day
 4th May Cassinga Day
 25th May Africa Day (anniversary of the OAU's foundation)
 26th August Heroes' Day
 10th December International Human Rights Day
 25th December Christmas Day
 26th December Family/Goodwill Day
 Varies (Monday after Easter) Easter Monday
 Varies (40 days after Easter) Ascension

Learn the Lingo

The languages of Namibia reflect its diverse culture, fusing together European and indigenous African influences. It is common for Namibians to be fluent in two or three languages. The official language is English, having replaced German and Afrikaans since Namibia's independence, but while they are widely understood, particularly by the younger generations, they are mainly spoken only as a second language reserved for public sphere communication. Half of all Namibians speak Oshiwambo (Ovambo) as their first language.

ENGLISH	AFRIKAANS	ENGLISH	OSHIWAMBO
Greetings		Greetings	
Hello	Hallo	Good morning	Wa lala po
How are you?	Hoe gaa n dit met jou?	Good afternoon	Uhala po
Fine, thank you	Goed, dankie	Good night	Wa tokewa po
Goodbye	Totsiens	Thank you	Webare
Useful Phrases		Names	
Yes	Ja	A small local shop	Cuca shop
No	Nee	A large, shallow pool of water that forms during the rainy season	Oshana
Please	Asseblief		
I love you	Ek is life vir jou	Food	
Excuse me (to ask for something)	Verskoon my!	Millet, the staple crop in northern Namibia	Mahangu
Excuse me (to pass by)	Ekskuus!	A popular porridge made from mahangu	Oshithema
How much is this?	Hoeveel kos dit?		
Thank you (very much)	Dankie!		

Lay of the Land

A country of deserts and sand dunes, elephants and antelope, Namibia hosts an astounding diversity of plants and wildlife, despite being the second most sparsely populated country in the world.

Two major deserts characterise this hot region, the Kalahari Desert in the east, and the ancient Namib Desert in the west. In between these two giants rises the magnificent central highlands, of which the Konigstein reaches the highest point at 2,600 metres. As well as vast expanses of desert, Namibia also has rocky areas and lush savannah and woodlands in the centre and north east of the country.

The barren Namib Desert stretches along the Atlantic coast for 1,000 miles terminating at the mighty Orange River along the southern border with South Africa and is considered to be the oldest desert in the world. Beautiful and unusual wildlife lives here among some of the tallest sand dunes in the world, attracting botanists and geologists alike. One of these remarkable endemic species is *Welwitschia mirabilis*, a shrub like plant which grows only two long, strap-shaped leaves continuously throughout its lifetime. Deriving moisture from the coastal sea fogs, *Welwitschia* can survive in extremely arid conditions, and its long leaves, gnarled and twisted from the desert winds, often grow several meters long.

To the east sits the Kalahari Desert, the ancestral land of the oldest culture in the world, the Bushmen. It is thought that these indigenous people have been living in the Kalahari continuously as nomadic hunter gatherers for at least 22,000 years, sharing its red sands with lions, brown hyenas, several species of antelope and over 400 identified plant species. The cultural and biological importance of this region has given rise to a number of game reserves, including the Central Kalahari game reserve, which is the world's second largest protected area.

A remarkable strip of land in the northeast, known as the Caprivi Strip, is the vestige of a narrow corridor demarcated for the German Empire to access the enormous Zambezi River, which is the fourth largest in Africa. The Caprivi Strip is a narrow protrusion of Namibia eastwards, connecting the country to Zambia and Zimbabwe. The area is rich in wildlife and mineral resources and home to a diverse range of indigenous inhabitants, including Bantu and Khoisan speaking groups.

What's the Weather like?

Although it's predominantly desert, Namibia enjoys regional climatic variations. The country enjoys a minimum of 300 days of sunshine a year, but temperatures and rainfall vary considerably both seasonally and geographically. The most arid climate is found in the central Namib, where summer daytime temperatures climb to over 40°C but can fall to below freezing at night. Daytime temperatures in the mountainous and semi arid Central Plateau (including Windhoek) are generally lower than in the rest of the country. There are two rainy seasons: the "little rains" from October to December and the main rainy period from January to April. The latter is characterised by brief showers and occasional thunderstorms that clean the air.

Biodiversity

Namibia plays host to biodiverse havens, such as the Okavango Delta in the north and Orange River in the south, as well as a strip of Kalahari to the east, and as a result boasts a riotous number of endemic species. The country has 14 vegetation zones: a variety of desert and semi desert vegetation, mopane, mountain, thorn bush, highland, dwarf shrub, camel thorn and mixed tree and shrub savannahs and the forest savannahs and woodlands in the northeast. Within these wide-ranging zones can be found a total of 422 grass species, 4,300 higher plant species and 200 endemic plant species – lithops (or stone flower or "bushman's buttocks") and lichens (around 100

species) are some of the most prolific plant species in the country. The desert plant, *welwitschia mirabilis*, endemic to the Namib Desert, is a living fossil and the oldest plant known to man.

There are over 120 species of tree. In the north, the land is dominated by trees such as the mopane, terminalia, marula, giant fig trees, baobabs, makalani palms, and the tamboti and Transvaal tTeak trees that are so commercially exploitable for timber. The arid central and southern regions are host to kekerboom (or "quiver tree"), aloe dichotoma, several species of the leadwood tree and commiphora and the combretum imberbe – with many local cultures perceiving some of these trees to be holy. Plants like the devil's claw and hoodia are now making medicinal breakthroughs worldwide and are mostly found in Namibia. Some of these species are only seen in 15 year cycles and yet more only found during specific weather conditions, which still astounds biologists to this day.

Namibia is also home to elephant, lion, rhino, buffalo, cheetah, leopard, giraffe and antelope. In Namibia alone there are 20 species of antelope, 240 kinds of mammals (14 of which are endemic), 250 varieties of reptiles, and 50 of frogs, and about 630 species of bird. Rare species such as honey badgers, wild dogs, sable antelope, pangolins, "black zebras" in Etosha, black-face impalas in the northwest and desert dwelling moles have found a haven in Namibia – though still hard to spot, seeing them in this country is far easier than trying to find them anywhere else in the world.

Namibia's wide ranging climate and biodiversity has given some animals a unique evolutionary twist: elephants and giraffe adapted to desert, lions dwelling by desert rivers and jackals that survive solely by scavenging the seal colonies on the Skeleton Coast. Namibia's huge range of habitats and species means it is one of the best places in the world to see wild animals, discover new plants and travel a sprawling and unique country quite unlike any other.

Good Books

Guidebooks

- Botswana and Namibia. Paula Hardy & Matthew Firestone Lonely Planet Publications, 2007. ISBN 9781741047608
- Namibia Insight Guide. APA Publications Pte Ltd., Singapore, 2006. ISBN 9789812585271
- African Adventurer's Guide to Namibia. Willie Olivier. Struik Publishers, 2006. ISBN 9781770072879
- Namibia (Globetrotter Travel Guide). Willie Olivier & Sandra Olivier. New Holland Publishers Ltd., 5th edition, 2006. ISBN 9781845375751
- Namibia (Globetrotter Travel Map). New Holland Publishers Ltd., 5th edition, 2006. ISBN 9781845375850

Wildlife

- Birds of Namibia (Photographic Guides). Jackie Sinclair. Struik Publishers, 2002. ISBN 9781868727643
- The Elephant's Secret Sense: The Hidden Life of the Wild Herds of Africa. Caitlin O'Connell. Free Press, 2007. ISBN 9780743284417
- Southern Africa: South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Southern Mozambique (Travellers' Wildlife Guides). William Branch, Chris Stuart & Tilde Stuart. Interlink, 2006. ISBN 9781566566391
- Desertscapes of Namibia. J. du Plessis & Tim O'Hagan. Struik Publishers, 2003 ISBN

9781868726936

- Namibia: Photo Safari Companion (Safari Companions). Alain Pons & Christine Baillet. Evans Mitchell Books, 2006. ISBN 9781901268218

Fiction/Travel Writing

- Etosha: Rhythms of an African Wilderness. Claudia du Plessis & Wynand du Plessis. Claudia & Wynand du Plessis, 2003. ISBN 9789991663142
- Namibia Space. Chris Marais & Julienne du Toit. Struik Publishers, 2006. ISBN 9781770073326
- This Is Namibia (World of Exotic Travel Destinations). Peter Joyce & Gerald Cubbitt. Struik Publishers, 2000. ISBN 9781859742815
- The Waterberg: The Natural Splendours & the People. David Holt-Biddle, Gerald Hinde & William Taylor. Struik Publishers, 2003. ISBN 9781868728220
- The Old Way: A Story of the First People. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006. ISBN 9780374225520

CONTACT INFORMATION

Call us on 020 7613 2422 (UK) / 1 949 336 8178 (US)

Mail us on info@frontier.ac.uk

Check out our social media here: