

Namibia

Overview

Fast Facts:

- Languages: English, Afrikaans, German, Owambo, Kavango, Herero, Khoikhoi (Nama/Damara), San dialects, and other ethnic languages
- Population: 2.1 million
- Capital city: Windhoek
- Currency: Namibian dollar
- People: Namibia's population is made up of the Ovambo, Kavango, Herero, Damara, Nama, Caprivian, San, Baster and Tswana.
- President: Hifikepunye Pohamba
- Government: Republic
- Religion: Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Baha'is and other indigenous beliefs
- Climate: Semi desert with high plateaus
- Average Temp:
- Major Industries: Mining, livestock processing, crop farming, fishing, and forestry.

Accommodations:

Namibia offers visitors to the country a range of luxury and economy hotels in the main cities as well as bed and breakfasts. There are also campsites located in the country's national parks as well as exclusive game lodges that require a reservation for visitors to enjoy.

Transportation:

The roads in Namibia are well maintained and of a higher standard than many found in surrounding countries. Visitors to the country are able to rent cars from a number of international rental companies as well as local companies found in the country. There is very little public transportation with taxi's available in Windhoek. There is a train service that runs from Windhoek to Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa.

When To Go:

Depending on where in Namibia you are planning to travel will determine when you should visit the country. Visiting the capital of Windhoek is best done from May to September to avoid the heat and heavy summer rains. The southern part of the country near Luderitz should be visited during the winter, also between May and September, however visitors should bring warm clothing as the desert area can get cold. The southern coast should be visited between February and May with visitors packing for cool misty weather. The Namib coast should be visited between October and March to avoid the scalding heat of the country's interior and the Skeleton Coast offers moderate weather all year round with the best fishing to be had from November to March.

Infrastructure:

Communications

There is a major telecommunications network in Namibia making telephones a staple of the country's populated areas, including coin operated pay phones. Direct and international phone calls can be made from most phones in the country. Cell phones are usable over most of the country. Visitors requiring facsimile service can find it at most hotels.

Electricity

220/240 volt AC 50 Hertz is the current power grid being used in Namibia. Wall sockets are round three pin sockets that carry a maximum of 15 amps. Visitors to the country should carry a 3 pin round and square electrical adaptor when visiting. Adaptors for shavers and other electrical adaptors are usually available in the hotels.

Medical Services

When visiting Namibia, visitors should be carrying comprehensive medical insurance as they will be responsible for their own medical needs. There are some public hospitals in the larger towns and cities as well as some private hospitals, clinics, private doctors and pharmacies. As HIV/Aids is widespread in the country, visitors who think they may engage in sexual activities are advised to bring their own condoms as the ones that are available may not be suitable for use. Visitors coming in from areas where Yellow fever is prevalent must show a certificate from a doctor. Visitors should also have updated immunizations for the following before entering the country: diphtheria; hepatitis A and B; malaria; meningitis; polio; TB; tetanus; typhoid; and rabies.

Currency

The current unit of currency in the country is the Namibian Dollar. The South African Rand is also considered legal tender in Namibia.

Banks

Visitors to Namibia will find banks in most urban centers. They are usually open from 9am to 3:30pm Monday through Friday and from 8:30am to 11am on Saturdays. Currency can be exchanged at the banks or at the major hotels for a small fee. Visitors will be required to show their passports for these transactions. ATMs can be found in most large towns around Namibia.

Credit Cards and Traveler's Cheques

Credit cards are accepted in the cities and major towns. They are not accepted at petrol filling stations and cash is required. Traveler's cheques need to be converted to local currency.

Languages:

The primary language spoken in Namibia is English, however visitors to the country will note that many other languages are spoken there as well, including: Afrikaans; German; Owambo; Kavango; Herero; Khoikhoi (Nama/Damara); different San dialects; and other ethnic languages.

Climate:

Considered an arid country, Namibia only gets about 270mm of rain and other precipitation throughout the year. The interior of the country is warm and temperate although the temperature can soar above 35° C during the summer and fall below freezing during the winter nights. The coastline of Namibia is temperate and dry. When there is precipitation on the coasts it is in the form of fog that rolls inland from the Atlantic Ocean. When it rains in Namibia, it usually falls during the summer with the highest totals in the north-east corner of the country.

Main Attractions

Bwabwata National Park

This national park is one of Namibia's pride and joys. It encompasses 20,500 hectares of the country and includes five different zone areas: the Caprivi Triangle, also known as the Kwando Core Area; the Mahango Game Reserve; the Buffalo Core Area; the old West Caprivi Game Reserve; and Popa Falls. The park's main purpose is to help rehabilitate the many different wildlife populations in the country that were almost poached into extinction. There is an additional entrance fee for the Mahango Game Reserve and Popa Falls area.

Etosha National Park

Covering close to 20,000 square kilometers, Etosha National Park is located in the white and green landscape of the Etosha Pan. Called the 'Great White Place of Dry Water', the park is the home to 114 different mammal species, 340 bird species, one type of fish, 16 different reptiles and amphibians and a lot of bugs. The eastern section of the park is open to visitors and there are three rest camps with shops and an information center. Visitors should book their visits well in advance in order to secure a tour spot.

Fish River Canyon National Park

Fish River Canyon National Park is a unique gorge that empties out into the Orange River 70 kilometers south of the canyon. The interior of the canyon goes as far down as 550 meters and visitors will definitely want to bring their cameras and hiking boots so that they can explore this unique natural wonder.

Travel Tips

What to pack

When packing for your trip to Namibia you will want to have comfortable casual clothing with you due to the climate. You should bring with you:

- Light colored clothing such as khaki, tan and white items
- Light cotton shirts and trousers or shorts for the summer
- Long sleeved light weight clothing if you plan on taking game drives that will protect you from the sun and mosquitoes
- Safari pants for the cooler days and nights
- Sweaters or jackets for the game drives
- Swim suit
- Compact rain coat
- Tracksuit for sleeping in during the winter
- A nice outfit for dining at an elegant establishment
- Hat and sunglasses
- Sandals
- Walking shoes
- Camera with extra batteries and film
- Binoculars

- Insect repellent
- Sun block
- Sleeping bag, towels and torch for camping safaris

Malaria Tablets

Namibia is considered a malaria zone so you should bring malaria tablets with you as prescribed by your physician. Pregnant women should not visit the area unless cleared by their doctors as they are not able to take the malaria prevention medication.

Insect/ Mosquito repellent

Mosquitoes usually prefer the night time and it is advisable to keep you neck, arms and legs covered and use repellent. You should make use of the mosquito netting provided in your accommodations and they should be securely tucked in or touching the floor when you retire for the night. If you must wear short sleeved clothing at night make sure that you have enough repellent on your body to keep from being bit. Mosquito bites are how people contract malaria.

Travel insurance

You should invest in travel insurance before coming to Namibia. The medical facilities in the country are poor and if you should need to leave due to an emergency medical condition the insurance will cover it. It is also a good idea to have it in place in the event you are robbed.

Crime

Namibia is considered a low risk country when it comes to crime if you take the proper precautions. Always keep you possessions under close watch when in a busy area and make sure your valuables are hidden by using a money belt. If you should run into any problems keep you calm and treat the authorities with respect. They will be more likely to return the favor and help you.

Entry Requirements

Visitors must have a valid passport and/or visa in order to enter Namibia. Visas are not required for visitors entering the country from: the United Kingdom; Germany; Switzerland; Russia; Liechtenstein; Luxembourg; Ireland; Portugal; Spain; Italy; Austria; France; Sweden; Norway; Finland; Denmark; Netherlands; Belgium; USA; Canada; Cuba; Japan; Singapore; Malaysia; Brazil; Kenya; South Africa; Zimbabwe; Tanzania; Angola; Zambia; Mozambique; Botswana; Australia and New Zealand. You are also required to have a valid return air fare ticket in your possession when you enter the country as well as sufficient funds to cover your stay in Botswana. These things will be verified with customs officials upon arrival.