

Khaudum National Park



The Khaudum National Park is a true African wilderness and perhaps a bit of self-discovery. The park, situated in north-eastern Namibia bordering Botswana, has less than 3 000 visitors annually and there are few tracks through the deep Kalahari sand. More elephants than people frequent the park. It is a refuge for African wild dog and roan antelope. Lion, cheetah and leopard are also found here.

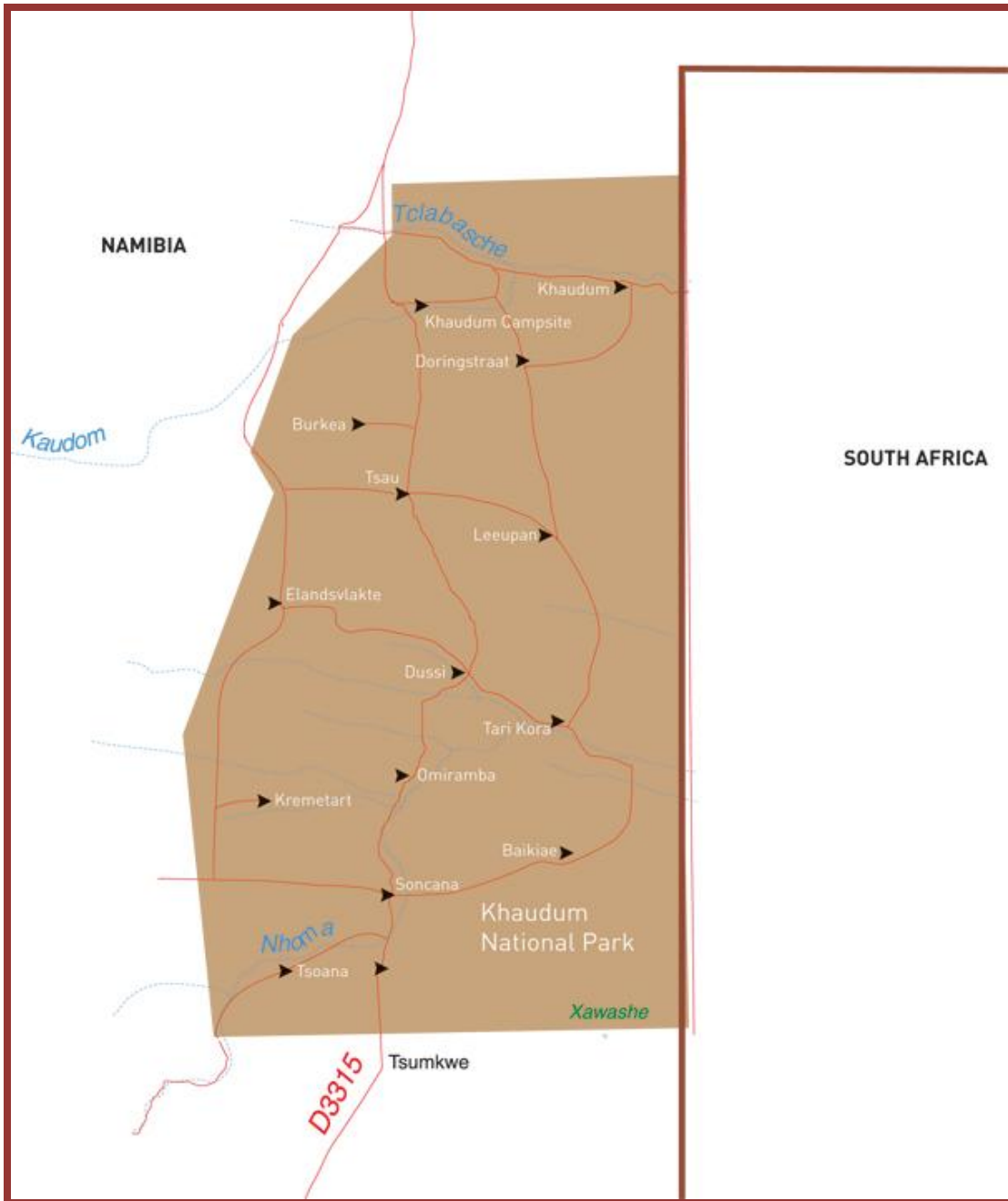
The park is unfenced except along the Botswana border, so game is able to move into neighbouring conservancies. Park staff cooperate with the conservancies in the joint management of the wildlife that moves between the park and neighbouring land.

The Khaudum National Park is home to large herds of elephants, the African wild dog, Africa's most endangered large predator, rare sable antelope, and over 320 species of birds.

FACT FILE

Park size:	3 842 km ²
Date proclaimed:	1989
Natural features:	Kalahari sandveld with omurambas (fossil drainage lines) which act as ideal routes for wildlife.
Vegetation:	Tree and Shrub Savannah Biome. Dominant trees include leadwood (<i>Combretum imberbe</i>), evergreen false mopane (<i>Guibourtia coleosperma</i>), various acacia species including camel-thorn trees (<i>Acacia erioloba</i>), Zambezi teak (<i>Baikiaea plurijuga</i>), tamboti (<i>Spirostachys africana</i>) and baobab (<i>Adansonia digitata</i>).
Wildlife:	Elephant, roan antelope, giraffe, eland, tsessebe, reedbuck, lion, African wild dog, leopard, spotted hyaena, ostrich, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, kudu, gemsbok, warthog, side-striped jackal and various other smaller species. A total of 320 bird species have been recorded, including ground hornbill, African hobby falcon, racket-tailed roller and Bradfield's hornbill. Summer visitors are Abdim's stork, yellow-billed kite, steppe and lesser spotted eagles, and African golden oriole.
Tourism:	Game viewing, bird-watching. New camps under construction at Sikeretti and Khaudum. No accommodation currently available due to renovations. Twelve artificial watering holes and two natural fountains. Several game-viewing hides. The MET recommends at least two 4x4 vehicles per party, at least three days' worth of food rations per person and 100 litres of water per vehicle.

Map



Conservation successes

Only the border with Botswana and a 55km section of the park's western border are fenced in the Khaudum National Park. This open park system ensures that wildlife can pursue hereditary migratory routes to and from the water rich Kavango River and floodplains, including the Okavango Delta, a mere 150 km from the park boundary. Thus wildlife migratory routes link Namibia, Botswana and Angola under a protective legislative coat. In addition, the Khaudum National Park is the only park in Namibia that protects the Northern Kalahari Sandveld biome, portrayed as forest savanna and woodland. The park is also one of the few refuges in which rare and endangered species such as Roan antelope and African wild dog can roam freely, underlining the park's important conservation status.

Key management issues

Water is the main limiting factor in Khaudum, as underground water sources are limited. The park needs to deliver between 700 000 and 900 000 litres of water per day to meet game consumption needs. This amount will increase rapidly if the elephant population keeps on rising (currently around 3 500). This in turn could spell catastrophe, as antelope species will not be able to compete for water, making death due to thirst likely.

Seventy-two-hour full-moon game counts are conducted in September and October. Specially designed elephant cribs built at waterholes have increased water quality for wildlife, as less water is lost to evaporation and cleaner, better quality water is provided.

Fires enter the park from Botswana and neighbouring communities every year, causing devastating vegetation loss.

Future Plans

A concession has been awarded to the Gciriku Traditional Authority and the Muduva Nyangana and George Mukoya conservancies to manage the new camps, to boost support for the park by the local community and to acknowledge that the land was first made available for conservation by the Traditional Authority.