



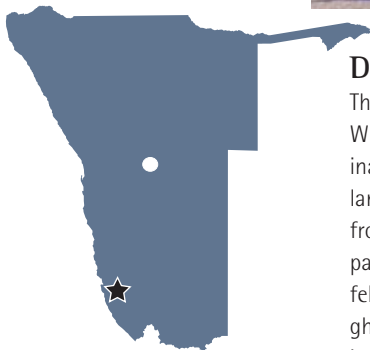
Sperrgebiet National Park

"Of all the parks I've worked in over the past 30 years, the Sperrgebiet is my favourite. I love its extremes."

*Trygve Cooper • Chief Warden, Sperrgebiet National Park,
Ministry of Environment and Tourism*



Republic of Namibia
Ministry of Environment and Tourism



Discover the Sperrgebiet National Park

The Sperrgebiet National Park is Namibia's newest national park. While the park is largely undeveloped and much of it remains inaccessible to visitors, there is still a chance to explore this wild landscape. Ministry of Environment and Tourism concessionaires from Lüderitz take visitors into the southern extremity of the park where they can admire the colossal 55-metre-tall Bogenfels rock arch, the modern diamond mine and the mysterious ghost town at Elizabeth Bay, the ghost town of Pomona (which is noteworthy for enduring the highest average wind speeds in Southern Africa) and Märchentäl – the famous 'Fairytale Valley', where diamonds were once so common they could be picked up in handfuls as they gleamed in the light of the moon. Observe the birds and animals that frequent the Orange River mouth, an internationally renowned Ramsar site. And, of course, don't miss the succulents, some of which grow as tall as trees and many of which put on a stunning floral display after winter rains.

Forbidden no more

The Sperrgebiet (meaning 'forbidden territory') covers 26 000 km² of globally important semi-desert, forming part of the Succulent Karoo biome that extends down into South Africa. With its profusion of succulent species that in terms of endemism and number is unrivalled anywhere else on the planet, conservation scientists have classified this area as one of the world's top 34 Biodiversity Hotspots. To qualify for hot-spot status, an area must contain at least 1 500 endemic vascular plants (0.5% of the planet's total). Prior to the establishment of the Sperrgebiet National Park, a mere 11% of the Namibian portion of the Succulent Karoo, which is home to 2 439 endemic plants, fell in protected areas. Now, with the park's proclamation, 90% is protected. Due to its world-famous diamonds, the Sperrgebiet has been off-limits to the public for over a century and the habitat is largely untouched and pristine, making a visit to the Sperrgebiet National Park a truly unique wilderness experience.



Diamonds and conservation in the Sperrgebiet National Park

Diamond mining has both scarred and spared the Sperrgebiet. The interior, due to the exclusion policy, has remained pristine, but the coastal areas where the diamonds occur have suffered considerable damage. Yet the scene from Bogenfels with active mining in the distance proves that nature and industry can co-exist. In the early days diamonds could be identified and picked up by the handful in moonlight, particularly so in 'Fairytale Valley', but soon mining became more destructive as excavations began and beaches were moved off-shore to act as sea barriers enabling miners to extend their operations into the Atlantic. The Namdeb Diamond Corporation is working to restore damage caused by open-pit mining, re-vegetate spoil heaps and return affected areas to as near a natural state as possible. Some traces of the early diamond rush will be preserved. The numerous ghost towns, rusting fragments of railway and other historic items that still survive will be allowed

to remain. In their heyday some mining towns boasted surprising luxuries – skittle alleys, ice houses and dance halls. These structures will stand as a haunting testament to mankind's tenacity, greed and love of beauty until the shifting sands finally swallow them.

The Orange River

The Sperrgebiet's fierce and lonely landscape is bordered in the south by one of the greatest rivers in Southern Africa, the Orange. This mighty river rises in the Lesotho Drakensberg Mountains at an altitude of 3 000 metres. It is only 195 km distant from the Indian Ocean, yet it flows 2 000 km in the opposite direction before emptying into the Atlantic. The river mouth is a designated Ramsar site, and is one of Namibia's globally important wetlands (the others being Walvis Bay Lagoon, Sandwich Harbour and Etosha Pan), protecting an abundance of bird life. The reed beds and tidal mudflats sustain huge numbers of resident and migrant birds.



Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- Only enter the park with Ministry of Environment and Tourism concessionaires.
- Keep to existing roads and tracks.
- Do not litter.

- Do not remove any plant or animal material or artifacts from the park.
 - Follow the rules and regulations on your park permit.
- Enjoy the magic that is the Sperrgebiet National Park!

Future activities

Future Ministry of Environment and Tourism plans include the laying of ecologically sensitive guided hiking trails, and guided drives, the opening of basic rest camps, admission to limited numbers of fossil and archaeological sites, and visits to diamond mines, a meteorite crater, shipwrecks, seal and seabird colonies. Not to be missed is the Roter Kamm meteorite crater, the fourth largest in the world, viewed from the summit of Aurusberg Mountain, which is also noteworthy for its botanical hiking trail. The restricted mining town of Oranjemund will also be opening its doors to visitors soon, offering well-stocked shops with provisions, entertainment and sporting facilities, and acting as the perfect base from which to explore the southern Sperrgebiet National Park and the neighbouring /Ai-/Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park that straddles Namibia and South Africa.

Getting there:

Located off the B4, the main tarred road running between Keetmanshoop and Lüderitz, the Sperrgebiet National Park is open only to those travelling with a Ministry of Environment and Tourism concessionaire. Please contact the MET office in Lüderitz, Rosh Pinah and Oranjemund for more information.

Fact file:

Proclamation date: 2008

Size: 26 000 km²

Weather: Temperatures fluctuate dramatically, but one constant is the wind. Be prepared for savage gales, flying grit and adventure.

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