

KALAHARI

A place of soothing beauty and serenity, the Kalahari is no ordinary desert. In fact, it's not even a desert - as its incredible wildlife, birdlife and infinite savannah plains will attest.



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Fascinating and inspiring interactions with the San - Earth's First People

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Tranquil beauty beneath an endless deep blue sky

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Excellent overnight guided walking safaris

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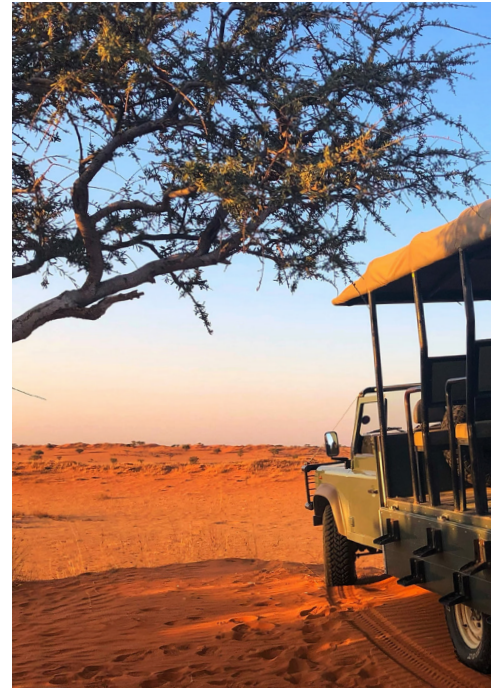
Remarkable diversity of wildlife including endemic black-maned lions and meerkats

With its minimalist palette of burnt ochre sand dunes, golden grasslands and impossibly blue sky, the most striking feature of the Kalahari is its singular beauty. A beauty enhanced by the complete silence of its uninhabited vastness - 2.5 million square km of semi-arid savannah plains almost devoid of human activity.

Contrary to its unpopulated aridity, the Kalahari's attractions - exquisite scenery aside - are its people and wildlife. The San hunter-gatherers - Earth's oldest surviving culture - have thrived in this great thirstland for many thousands of years. And with room aplenty, excellent grazing and minimal human encroachment, the Kalahari supports an incredible diversity of animals and birds.



KALAHARI FACTS



Include an interpretive bush walk with a San guide when visiting the Kalahari (left); Take a guided game drive through the rust-red plains (above)

1. The Kalahari is an enormous sand basin covering most of Botswana and a large part of Namibia. It's bigger than the whole of France. Or Texas.
2. The Kalahari is not a desert. It's a semi-arid savannah and its desert-like appearance (and misnomer) comes from an almost complete absence of surface water.
3. The Kalahari is old, having formed over 65 million years ago with some estimates going as far back as 135 million years.
4. Earth's First People - the San hunter-gatherers - have inhabited the Kalahari for more than 20,000 years and their gene pool stretches back 200,000 years.
5. The San are an egalitarian society with a gift economy and their knowledge of medicinal plants, water harvesting techniques, hunting and foraging is prodigious.
6. Notable predators include endemic black-maned lions, cheetahs, leopards, wild dog, hyena, jackals and foxes.
7. Antelope you'll likely encounter include the unashamedly photogenic oryx as well as springbok, wildebeest, hartebeest, duiker and steenbok.
8. Birdlife is abundant: endemic sociable weavers with their gigantic communal nests and secretary birds, bustards, eagles, owls, kites, ostriches and countless desert-adapted LBJs.
9. Reptiles are well represented in this ever-sunny realm with snakes, lizards, skinks, geckos and even frogs - listen out for the bushveld rain frog and tremolo sand frog if you're lucky enough to be there during a rain storm.
10. Vegetation is diverse and abundant with around 500 plants on record that, like the animals, have developed fascinating survival techniques.

KALAHARI LANDMARKS

Trans-Kalahari Walk: A one-and-a-half day guided walking safari through the red sand dune streets of the Kalahari. Learn all about this fascinating ecosystem and its inhabitants big and small; experience life in the Kalahari through the eyes of your San guide.

Giant's Playground: Heaps of dolerite boulders stacked by playful giants - so the legend goes. Estimated to be 180 million years old, you'll find this geological quirk near Keetmanshoop.

Quiver Tree Forest: Appearing to grow out of bare rock, Namibia's national tree is actually an aloe and is also an important plant for the San (for their quivers as well as an ingenious cooling system). With about 250 specimens of this usually isolated plant, this is the largest concentration of quiver trees you'll ever see. The oldest of these have been here since the 1700s.

Mesosaurus Fossil Park: The metre-long crocodilian mesosaur was an early relative of modern reptiles that lived entirely underwater about 300 million years ago. The same fossils are found in South America supporting the continental drift hypothesis. A fascinating journey into pre-history and a rather scenic journey at that.

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park: An enormous (and wild) national park straddling South Africa and Botswana with access from Namibia via the Mata Mata gate. Take a guided game drive or walk to see migrating herds of wildebeest and springbok and a chance to see the Kalahari's varied wildlife and birdlife.

Dolerite boulders form interesting configurations (below); Giraffe are found throughout the dry savannah habitats of Namibia, including the open grassland areas in the Kalahari (right)



KALAHARI TIPS

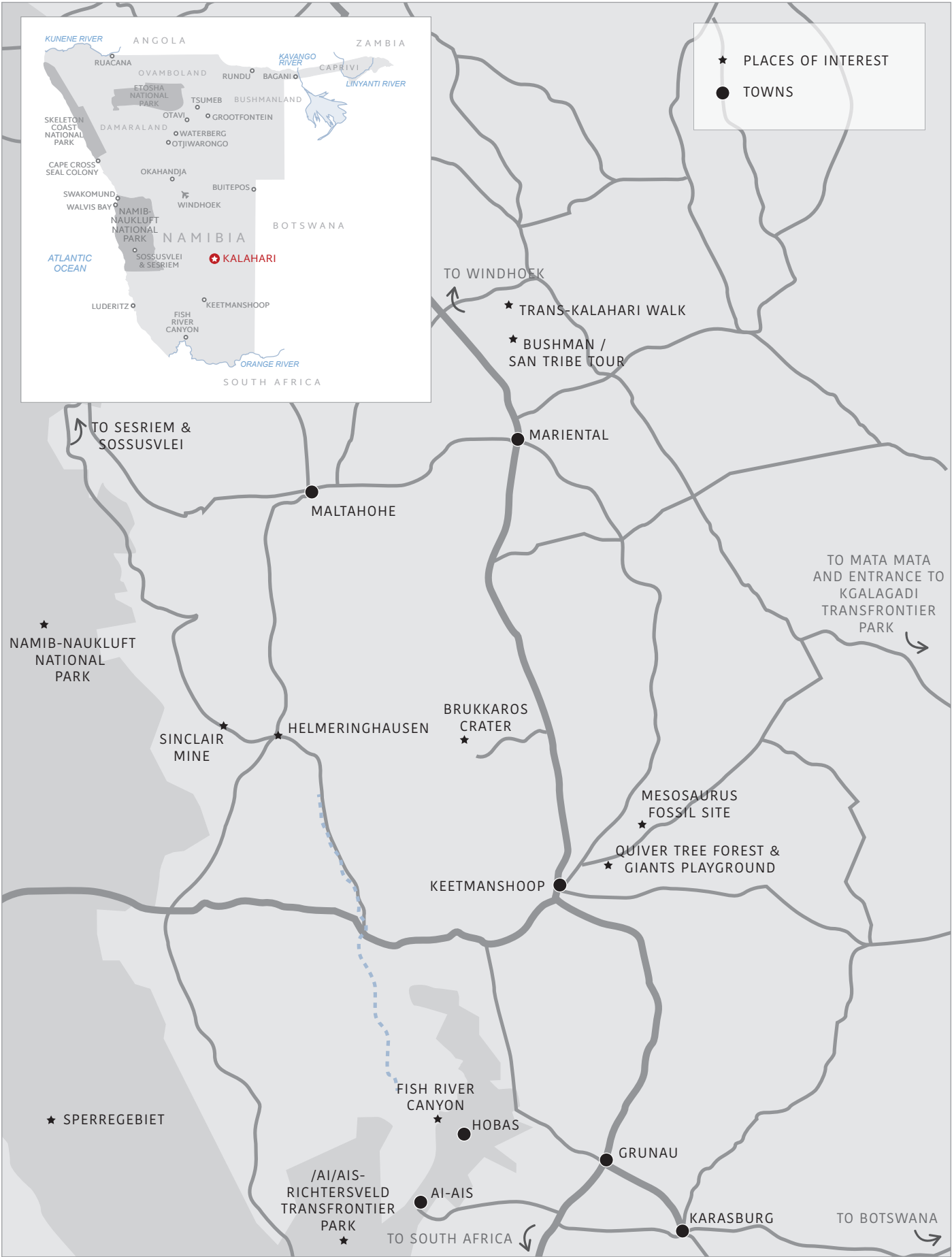
- Be sure to include an interpretive bush walk with a San guide when visiting the Kalahari. With over 20,000 years of accumulated knowledge, these ancient hunter-gatherers know a thing or two about life in the Kalahari.
- Book a fossil tour with Giel Steenkamp of the Mesosaurus Fossil Camp for a fascinating and deeply informative adventure.
- The Quiver Tree Forest and Namibia's dark sky make for spectacular night photography. You will need a special permit from the farm owner at Quivertree Forest Restcamp.
- When visiting the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, you must book a minimum of 2 nights' stay inside the park if you want to enter at one gate and exit at another. As a day tripper, you can enter and exit from Mata Mata.

KALAHARI DISTANCES

Windhoek – Mariental	270km	3 hours	Paved road
Windhoek – Keetmanshoop	500km	6 hours	Paved road
Keetmanshoop – Fish River Canyon	180km	3 hours	Mostly gravel road
Sossusvlei – Mariental	280km	4 hours	Gravel road
Sossusvlei – Keetmanshoop	500km	5 - 6 hours	Half gravel half paved road
Sossusvlei – Keetmanshoop via Goageb	500km	6 - 7 hours	Mostly gravel road
Mariental – Mata Mata	320km	4 - 5 hours	Gravel road
Keetmanshoop – Mata Mata	265km	3 - 4 hours	Gravel road



KALAHARI MAP



KALAHARI WEATHER

Summer highs in the Kalahari can reach 45°C (115 °F) and the nighttime temperatures hover around the 25°C mark (80°F).

Winter days are warm and dry with temperatures around the mid-20s Celsius occasionally venturing into the 30s (70 - 90°F). Winter nights and early mornings are cold, dropping to single digits Celsius and occasionally dropping below freezing (50 - 25°F).

For most of the year, the Kalahari is dry and arid featuring classic golden grasses against the ochre sand. The landscape turns green during the rainy summer from January to March with sporadic showers and thunderstorms that vanish as quickly as they appear. Photography is best during and after the rainy season with clear light and saturated contrasts.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
AVERAGE HIGH °C (°F)	32 (90)	31 (88)	30 (86)	29 (84)	26 (79)	23 (73)	24 (75)	26 (79)	31 (88)	33 (91)	33 (91)	32 (90)
AVERAGE LOW °C (°F)	19 (66)	18 (64)	17 (63)	13 (55)	8 (46)	5 (41)	5 (41)	7 (45)	12 (54)	16 (61)	18 (64)	18 (64)
DAILY MEAN °C (°F)	25,5 (78)	24,5 (76)	23,5 (74,5)	21 (69,5)	17 (62,5)	14 (57)	14,5 (58)	16,5 (62)	21,5 (71)	24,5 (76)	25,5 (77,5)	25 (77)
AVERAGE RAINFALL MM (INCHES)	87 (3.4)	64 (2.5)	50 (2)	30 (1)	6 (0.2)	2 (0.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (0.2)	22 (0.9)	45 (1.8)	60 (2.4)

