

# KAOKOLAND

With dramatic scenery on a mind-altering scale, Kaokoland feels like a whole other planet. It's inhabited by an ancient tribe of nomadic herders. And elephants.



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Learn the extraordinary ways of the Himba - Kaokoland's custodians

2

Track desert-adapted elephants, lions and free-roaming rhinos

3

Enormous, arresting landscapes devoid of human activity

4

Adventure, relaxation and birding on the Kunene River

In Kaokoland you can drive for days without seeing another car. If it weren't for the rough gravel roads and a random red oil drum you'd think humans had yet to venture this far into Namibia's remote and wild northwest region.

As you scratch the surface of this unexplored realm of ancient mountains, infinite plains and mesmerising beauty, you'll learn that Kaokoland is a place of surprising life and vitality. Of fascinating people, plants and animals ingeniously adapted to thrive in this arid and spectacularly beautiful world.



# KAOKOLAND FACTS



Track desert-adapted wildlife on foot in the Palmwag Concession (above) or, if you're lucky, they'll visit your camp at Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp (left).

1. Kaokoland - pronounced kokoland - is the largest and least populated region of Namibia. It's (much) bigger than Portugal, which has a population of 10.5 million. Kaokoland by contrast has a population of 87,000.
2. After Namibia's independence in 1992, the region was renamed Kunene. For practical and sentimental reasons "Kaokoland" is still widely used and understood to mean that vast, unexplored wilderness in northwest Namibia.
3. The Himba have maintained their semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle for over 500 years.
4. In a world-leading conservation programme, the land and its wildlife are owned and run by the Himba as conservancies.
5. The Kunene River is one of five perennial rivers in Namibia - all of them shared with neighbouring countries as natural borders.
6. The Kaokoveld is an epochs-old coastal desert biome along the Skeleton Coast in the extreme northwest of Kaokoland.
7. The extraordinary Welwitschia plant - often called a living fossil - is a renowned Kaokoveld endemic along with the Cinderella waxbill and rufous-tailed palm thrush.
8. Elephant, lion, rhino, giraffe, zebra and several antelope have adapted - both physically and behaviourally - to thrive in this arid environment.
9. The region is characterised by huge rocky mountain ranges rising up to 2km above sea level and punctuated by enormous plains of gravel and grass.
10. The Kaokoveld is so wild, remote and rugged that single-vehicle expeditions are inadvisable, even for experienced off-road drivers.

# KAOKOLAND LANDMARKS

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**Conservancies:** The entire Kunene/Kaokoland region is a patchwork of mega-conservancies owned by the local communities and managed in partnership with private-sector safari lodges. A pioneering stewardship conservation model that has helped return black rhinos to the wild as well as protect the entire ecosystem.

**Palmwag Concession:** Palmwag Concession is a gigantic (550,000 ha) community conservation area famous for its rhino and desert-adapted elephants and wildlife. Other notable conservancies include Omatendeka, Anabeb, Sesfontein, Purros and #Khoadi-//Hôas.

**Wildlife Tracking:** Tracking desert-adapted elephant, lion and rhino on foot or in specially modified safari vehicles. With such an enormous range, sightings are not guaranteed but you get to see and experience so much on this excursion that it's always thoroughly rewarding.

**Himba Village:** The Himba people are incredibly proud, resilient and resourceful. On a guided village visit, you will learn how they survive in this seemingly uninhabitable place; discover their traditions, rituals and way of life - fascinating and illuminating in every detail.

**The Kunene River:** The Kunene River is a destination all to itself at the end of a very long drive (or a quick flight if you prefer). Safari-style lodges hover above the water and the banks are lined with incongruously lush palm trees. Activities on the river include sundowner cruises, canoeing, white-water rafting, birding, nature walks, Himba village visits, quad bike trails and elephant tracking.

**Epupa Falls:** While you're at the Kunene River a visit to Epupa Falls is a must. Namibia's only permanent waterfalls are suitably spectacular and scenic, plummeting 60 metres over a distance of 1.5 km.

**Marienfluss and Hartmann's Valley:** Exploring Kaokoland is a large part of the experience: track wildlife along the dry riverbeds; explore Marienfluss and Hartmann's Valleys; seek out a Welwitschia or a mysterious Lone Man sculpture; tackle Van Zyl's Pass; camp wild; discover miraculous plants, animals, birds and reptiles; get outside yourself and delve deep into the great, great beyond



*Visit the Himba villages and discover their traditions and fascinating way of life (left); Experience this harsh landscape on foot during a guided walking safari (below)*



# KAOKOLAND TIPS

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- Did we mention Kaokoland is wild? With almost no infrastructure you are far from basic services, shops and mobile reception. We recommend private guided tours but you can also join a guided self-drive convoy or fly in for an amazing Kaokoland experience.
- Fuel stops and shops are few and very far between. Most do not have card facilities so take enough cash in South African Rand (ZAR) or Namibian Dollars (NAD) for essential supplies.
- The gravel roads are often in poor condition due to flash flooding and the impossible logistics of maintenance. Allow for plenty of time on the road and don't be in a hurry to get there.
- Winter nights and mornings drop below freezing: pack for hot days and cold especially during those early morning game drives in search of desert-adapted wildlife.
- Keep your Himba village visits light and respectful. If you want to offer gifts or trade items, take spare clothes rather than money, sweets or any other modern vices.
- Most of the safari lodges offer guided excursions included in the rate; to get the most out of your Kaokoland experience it's a good idea to plan your activities ahead. Some might need bookings or a minimum stay; others might cost extra and you'll want to be prepared for that.
- The big attraction to Kaokoland is the sheer unspoiled beauty and otherworldliness of it all. Consider the extraordinary wildlife, birdlife and plantlife a massive but highly unpredictable cherry on top.
- The once spectacular Ruacana Falls upstream of Epupa on the Kunene River has been diverted to a hydroelectric dam. Flow is restricted most of the year but in full flood - when the dam opens after heavy rains - this is a truly awe-inspiring spectacle worth the extra journey. Be sure to check the water level and flow before setting off.

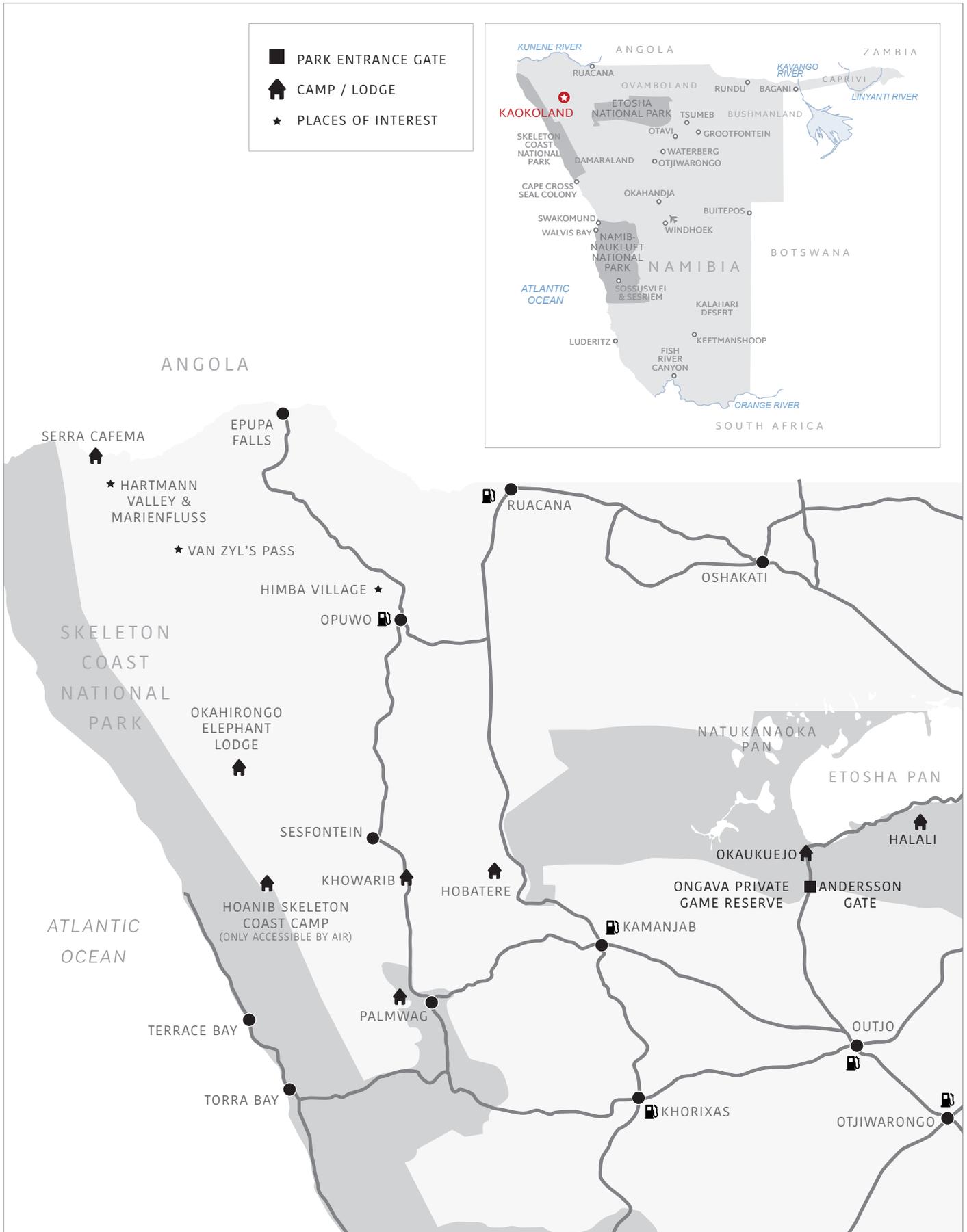
# KAOKOLAND DISTANCES

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Windhoek - Epupa Falls	910 km	11 hours	Mostly paved roads
Windhoek - Kamanjab	475 km	5 hours	Mostly paved roads
Swakopmund - Epupa Falls	845 km	12 hours	Gravel road
Swakopmund - Kamanjab	410 km	6 hours	Gravel road
Kamanjab - Etosha Anderson Gate	180 km	2 hours	Mostly gravel roads
Kamanjab - Epupa Falls	440 km	6 hours	Gravel road
Kamanjab - Purros	335 km	6 hours	Gravel road
Kamanjab - Opuwo	265 km	4 hours	Gravel road

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# KAOKOLAND MAP



# KAOKOLAND WEATHER

By day Kaokoland is warm to hot and dry all year round. What little rain this coastal desert gets is both welcome and short-lived. Unlikely, in any event, to affect your itinerary.

In winter the nights and early mornings get cold to freezing but they remain dry. Rain falls in summer here unlike the Namib Desert to the south and the landscape turns marvellously lush soon after the first rains arrive; and returns to its traditional brown not long after they've dissipated.

Mid-summer and late spring can get hot - well above 40°C (105°F) in the middle of the day. We recommend autumn (fall) and winter from March to September as the best months to visit Kaokoland.

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
AVERAGE HIGH °C (°F)	26 (79)	26 (79)	25 (77)	25 (77)	24 (75)	22 (72)	21 (70)	23 (73)	25 (77)	26 (79)	27 (81)	26 (79)
AVERAGE LOW °C (°F)	17 (63)	17 (63)	17 (63)	16 (61)	13 (55)	10 (50)	10 (50)	11 (52)	13 (55)	16 (61)	16 (61)	16 (61)
DAILY MEAN °C (°F)	21,5 (63)	21,5 (63)	21 (63)	20,5 (61)	18,5 (55)	16 (50)	15,5 (50)	17 (52)	19 (55)	21 (61)	21,5 (61)	21 (61)
AVERAGE RAINFALL MM (INCHES)	48 (1.9)	46 (1.8)	53 (2.1)	14 (0.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (0.3)	15 (0.6)	21 (0.8)

*One of the best ways to experience the vastness of Kaokoland is from above on a fly-in safari*

