



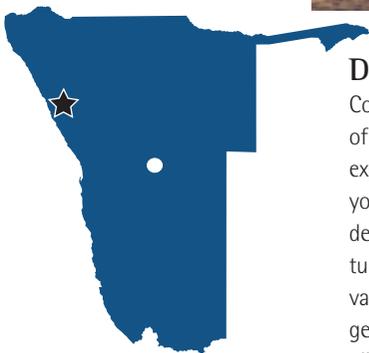
Skeleton Coast Park

"The thing I love is the pristine nature of the untouched landscapes. There are special things here – the desert elephants and the burrowing *Gerrhosaurus skoogi*. I have a heart for this park."

*Gerson Somaeb • Chief Warden, Skeleton Coast Park,
Ministry of Environment and Tourism*



Republic of Namibia
Ministry of Environment and Tourism



Discover the Skeleton Coast Park

Covering 1.6 million hectares, the Skeleton Coast Park remains one of the world's last great wildernesses: harsh, still not completely explored, definitely untamed and extraordinarily beautiful. Leave your car and take a stroll into – but not too far into – the stark desert landscape. Search the dunes for a glimpse of the small creatures that scurry across the sand or the larger ones that move for vast distances in their quest for survival in the desert. Explore the geological wonders of the desert – dunes that roar and rocks that glisten with promise. Or stick to the coast and fish off the rocky beaches at Terrace Bay and Torra Bay. The nutrient-rich Benguela Current provides the potential for a good feast on prized species such as galjoen and kabeljou (cob) or a good fight from the sea's bronze whaler sharks. Wreathed in sea fog, lashed by chill Atlantic waves, seared by the sun and scoured by high gritty winds, the Skeleton Coast is aptly named. For well over 500 years, ships have ran aground on its shores and wrecked mariners and castaways

have struggled vainly to cross the killing expanse of waterless dunes, mountains and lichen plains in search of safety.

A rocky history

When Swedish explorer Charles John Andersson encountered tales of the Skeleton Coast he declared, "Death would be preferable to banishment to such a country." But not everybody agreed. A group of people named variously as Strandlopers, Sandlopers or Dauna-Daman (meaning 'seaside people on a desert plain') used the beaches as foraging grounds. They survived on fish, seals, sea birds, dead whales and whatever else the Atlantic's cold Benguela Current threw their way. Like the wildlife, they moved inland when environmental circumstances made it essential. While at the seaside, they constructed shelters using stone and tents of skin, perhaps reeds, sometimes supported by whalebones. Sharp stone circles still survive along the coast.



Wildlife wonders

Professional photographers spend years, waiting patiently to capture images of desert-dwelling elephants sliding down dunes or lions feasting on beached whales. These scenes are exceptional and exceptionally rare. But somehow just knowing they are possible is enough when surrounded by the stark beauty of the Skeleton Coast Park. Towards the north-eastern park exit where game becomes more common, you may see springbok, zebra, ostrich and even lions. For most of the coastal drive, however, expect few large animals, although encounters with gemsbok and jackals are possible. Dolphins and whales put in occasional but spectacular appearances offshore.

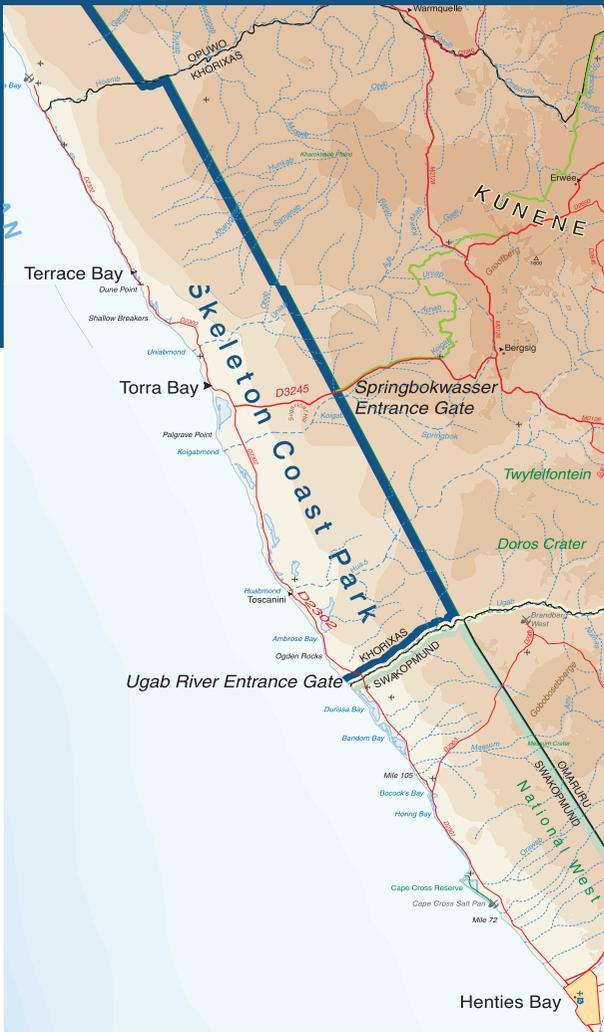
Geological finds

The geology is very visible. Time and nature have sculpted a dreamscape of sand and rock. The mica schists, gneiss and gran-

ites are up to 1 000 million years old. Three hundred million years ago an ice age brought vast glaciers that gouged out valleys and deposited boulder rubble when they melted. A hundred and fifty million years ago the sand began to arrive. Some of the dunes subsequently fossilised. The remains of ancient lava flows can still be seen at Terrace Bay. Today you find roaring dunes, castles of clay and beaches that sparkle with wind-polished stones.

Let it be: MET conservation work

The park has no fences, no artificial waterholes, and no active ecological management programmes. The 'hands-off approach' is considered best, given that the area has looked after itself quite adequately for rather a long time! However, in the near future ancient wildlife migration routes will be restored due to the proclamation of the Kunene People's Park that will link the Skeleton Coast with the Etosha National Park.



Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- Do not drive off road.
- Do not wander too far from your vehicle.
- Before you enter the park, make sure you have sufficient petrol, water and other supplies.
- Follow the rules and regulations as printed on your permit.

Enjoy this extraordinary, raw piece of wilderness!



Facilities:

Limited facilities exist in the Skeleton Coast Park. Petrol and water are available at Terrace Bay and camping with basic ablutions is found at Torra Bay, operated by Namibia Wildlife Resorts (www.nwr.com.na). Booking is essential and confirmation slips must be presented upon arrival.

Getting there:

The C34 road runs parallel to the coast and then a rough track continues up past Torra Bay to the MET station. Driving the C34 is straightforward, although fog can make the surface slick. The road is mostly gravel, so keep your speed below 80 kph. If you are passing through, you can buy an entry permit at either the Ugab or Springbokwasser Gate. There are several short detours to points of

interest, but off-road driving is strictly prohibited. It leaves scars that can last for centuries. This map shows the southern half of the park that is accessible to tourists.

Fact File:

Size: 16 845 km² - From the Ugab to the Kunene River, the Skeleton Coast Park protects about one third of Namibia's coastline.

Proclamation date: 1971

www.met.gov.na

Sponsored by:

