

Namibia - General Information

Location:

Namibia lies in Southern Africa, bordering the South Atlantic Ocean, between Angola and South Africa.

Land Boundaries:

Angola 1,376 km, Botswana 1,360 km, South Africa 967 km and Zambia 233km.

Geography:

Size 824,268 sq km, slightly more than half the size of Alaska, US or nearly 4 times the size of the UK. The terrain is mostly high plateau with the Namib Desert along coast and the Kalahari Desert in east. Namibia has a desert climate, it is hot, dry and rainfall is very sparse and erratic. The lowest point is the Atlantic Ocean at 0 m and the highest point is at Konigstein, on the Brandberg Mountain, which measures 2,579 m. Namibia is the first country in the world to incorporate the protection of the environment into its constitution. Some 14-15% of the land is protected, including virtually the entire Namib Desert coastal strip.

Population:

Approx 2.1 million people live in Namibia,(2006), it is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world and a density of just 2.2 per square. Life expectancy is around 40 years. Birth rate is on average 4.6 per woman, population rate is growing at 2.6% per year over the past 15 years. The population density, at just over two people per square kilometre, is one of the lowest in the world. It is estimated that 21% of the population is believed to have HIV/AIDS. Literacy rate is just over 84%.

Languages:

Whilst English is the official language 7%, many other languages are widely spoken. Afrikaans is actually the common language of most of the population including about 60% of the white population. German is spoken by 32% of the population. Many other languages are spoken by the Owambo, Herero, Kavango, Caprivians and Tswana, as well as the Khoisan languages spoken by the San/Bushmen, Nama and Damara

Ethnic Groups:

Black 87.5%, white 6% and mixed 6.5%. About 50% of the population belong to the Owambo tribe and 9% to the Kavangos tribe. Other ethnic groups are: Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, Bushmen 3%, Baster 2%, and Tswana 0.5%

Religion:

Christian 80% to 90% (Lutheran 50% at least) and indigenous beliefs

10% to 20%.

Political History:

South Africa occupied the German colony of South-West Africa during World War I and administered it as a mandate until after World War II, when it annexed the territory. In 1966 the Marxist South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrilla group launched a war of independence for the area that was soon named Namibia, but it was not until 1988 that South Africa agreed to end its administration in accordance with a UN peace plan for the entire region. Namibia won its independence in 1990 and has been governed by SWAPO since.

Hifikepunye Pohamba was elected president in November 2004 in a landslide victory replacing **Sam Nujoma** who led the country during its first 14 years of self rule.

Economic Overview:

The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining accounts for 20% of GDP. Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a primary source for gem-quality diamonds. Namibia is the fourth-largest exporter of nonfuel minerals in Africa, the world's fifth-largest producer of uranium, and the producer of large quantities of lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. The mining sector employs only about 3% of the population while about half of the population depends on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. Namibia normally imports about 50% of its cereal requirements; in drought years food shortages are a major problem in rural areas. A high per capita GDP, relative to the region, hides the great inequality of income distribution; nearly one-third of Namibians had annual incomes of less than \$1,400 in constant 1994 dollars, according to a 1993 study. The Namibian economy is closely linked to South Africa with the Namibian dollar pegged to the South African rand. Privatization of several enterprises in coming years may stimulate long-run foreign investment. Mining of zinc, copper, and silver and increased fish production led growth in 2003.

Transport

Public transport is not available to all destinations in Namibia. There are bus services from Windhoek - Cape Town/Johannesburg/Victoria Falls(Zambia)/Swakopmund but local transport between towns is mainly mini bus services and not a reliable service (departs when full and heads to main towns only). For tourists, this is not an ideal way to get around the country as it doesn't take you to places of interest such as National Parks etc. Namibia's main railway line runs from the South African border, connecting Windhoek to Swakopmund in the west and Tsumbed in the north. There is an extensive network of international and regional flights from Windhoe. Domestic charters are available to

all destinations.

Fauna

Big game - elephant, lion, rhino (including the endangered black rhino), buffalo, cheetah, leopard, giraffe, wild dog

20 antelope species

240 mammal species

250 reptile species

50 frog species

over 630 bird species

Endemic birds include - Herero chat; rockrunner, Damara tern,

Monteiro's Hornbill

Source: CIA World Factbook

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