

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Fact Sheet

Kalahari Desert

The Kalahari Desert is a part of the largest continuous area of sand in the world. Its sand plains cover nine African countries: Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo (in the north), Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe (in the centre), Botswana, Namibia and South Africa (in the south). The area covers approximately 2,5 million square kilometres and the sand is sometimes well over 100 metres deep.

It is an arid area with an annual rainfall of 200 mm, mainly between January and April. Day temperatures in summer can exceed 40°C while winter days are sunny with night temperature often below freezing.

The Kalahari is known for its variety of plant and animal life. It is not a desert in the true sense of the word as there is plant life. The southern Kalahari's most outstanding feature is the red and white-coloured sand plains covered with sparse grass, hardy shrubs and scattered camelthorn trees, as well as the red sand dune ridges.

Archaeological studies have confirmed human activity in the desert region dating as far back as the early Stone Age. The middle period of the Stone Age points to the cultural life of the San people.

Animal Life

- A large variety of mammal species are found in the Kalahari Desert. Many species have evolved to adapt to the harsh desert environment.
- The black maned Kalahari lion is unique to the area. Other typical animal species include the gemsbok, springbok, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, eland, spring hare, porcupine and hyena (both the brown and spotted hyena).
- Approximately 180 bird species are found in the desert.

Plant Life

- There are more than 400 plant species in the Kalahari Desert.
- The *Narra* (*Ancanthosicyos horrida*), belonging to the cucumber family, is a shrub with a moist rich fruit. Narra pips, better known as butter pips, have a distinct almond flavour.
- The *Wilde Okkerneut* (*Ricinodendron rautennii*) tree (Mokongwa in Setswana) has a hollow trunk, which serves as water reservoir and its fruit, the Manketti nut, is a part of the staple diet of the Khoisan.

Information Sources

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RELEASED ON BEHALF OF K GALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK BY AFRIKOM (12 May 2000)

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THE GEMSBOK (ORYX) SCULPTURE

- Life-size bronze sculpture of two running gemsbok (oryx). Weight: 450 kg.
- Took six months to complete. (Sculpting original wax, moulds, casting and bronze finishing.)
- Artist worked from photos, liaised with taxidermists and did anatomical studies at Onderstepoort.
- Certain skeleton parts were used. (An actual skull was used in the original wax sculpture.)

THE SYMBOLISM

- The sculpture depicts gemsbok on the run, with only two feet touching the ground. This represents the freedom brought about by the establishment of a transfrontier park where game can roam without physical restrictions over large expanses of land.

THE ARTIST

- Based in Pretoria, South Africa, Alan Ainslie's career as a wildlife artist commenced in 1984 when he was commissioned to produce wildlife paintings for a calendar.
- Ainslie held his first solo exhibition in 1987.
- He has participated in numerous international wildlife exhibitions together with the works of Raymond Harris-Ching (New Zealand), Keith Joubert (SA) and Paul Bosman (USA).
- The dominant factor in his work is realism, enhanced by poses that are subtle and true to life.
- Sculpting is a recent addition to his ability to capture and portray the creatures of the wild.

OTHER SCULPTURES

- Twelve miniature bronzes of a buffalo for the 1998 One Million Dollar Golf Challenge.
- 'Mafunyane' the elephant for the new Hillside aluminium plant in Maputo.
- Only other life-size bronze sculpture is that of a leopard.
- Currently tendering for a life-size horse and rider for Mauritius.

THE ARTIST ON HIS WORK

"To portray the characteristics of a wild animal in two-dimensional way through painting, is a challenge. To capture these characteristics in a three-dimensional form through sculpting, remains for me the ultimate expression of art."

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Historic Development of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

- The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) has been in *de facto* existence for more than half a century. It has enabled Botswana and South Africa to manage this vast area, located in the southern Kalahari, as a single ecological unit. In recognition of this agreement, no barriers to wildlife movement exist along the international boundary that separates the 9,591 km² Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in the Republic of South Africa and

the 28,400 km² Gemsbok National Park in Botswana.

- Since June 1992, a joint management committee comprised of representatives from the conservation authorities of South Africa and Botswana has been working to formalise the *de facto* agreement and establish the KTP. This is the first formally declared Transfrontier Park in Africa and it will hopefully serve as a model for conservation in the 21st century.
- Plans to formalise the joint development and management of the two contiguous parks were proposed in 1989 following a fact-finding study on tourism developments in Southern Africa, commissioned by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Botswana. As a result, in May 1991, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Botswana received the mandate to consult further on the matter with South African National Parks. Initial meetings between the two conservation agencies led to the establishment of the Transfrontier Management Committee (TMC).
- The TMC has been responsible for the co-ordination of the management of the two parks and has worked towards the formal establishment of the Transfrontier Park. The management plan for the area has been drafted by the TMC and the policies and actions necessary to maintain the cohesiveness and unity of the Transfrontier Park have been agreed upon. It provides the policies for joint management of the area as a single ecological unit and serves as a basis for the promotion of tourism. This plan is now being implemented and will be regularly revised and updated.
- Tourists will be able to move freely within the park and the TMC is producing a unified set of regulations to govern visitor behaviour throughout the Transfrontier Park. The two parks will operate autonomously in the running of their own internal affairs and in the development of their own tourist facilities as agreed in the management plan. Both countries recognise the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of the other. It has been agreed that entrance fees will be pooled and shared equally by both countries but that other income (from accommodation, camping, etc) will be retained by the country that generates it.

Joint Management Objectives

The overall objectives of the management plan of the KTP are as follows:

- To preserve the diversity of organisms indigenous to the southern Kalahari as functional elements of the ecosystem, with predators receiving priority
- To maintain those ecological processes which characterise the Kalahari ecosystem
- To provide facilities and opportunities for research and monitoring to advance understanding of the physical and biological processes of the Kalahari ecosystem
- To provide educational and interpretative programmes for visitors to foster a better understanding and appreciation of the Kalahari ecosystem
- To realise economic returns from tourism while safeguarding the ecological integrity and pristine wilderness of the Kalahari.

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where is the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) located?

In the Kgalagadi District on the south western border of Botswana and the Northern Cape border of South Africa. Its main entrance is situated approximately 865 km south west of Gaborone and about 166 km north of Upington.

2. How does one get to the Park?

From Upington on tarred road to the north.

To get to the Park from Botswana travel from Gaborone on tarred road for about 550 km until Tsabong in Kgalagadi District. From Tsabong travel for about 310 km on gravel road. This road is negotiable by 4 x 2 vehicles during the dry season and 4 x 4 vehicles during the wet season. An alternative route is to travel from Gaborone to Hukuntsi on tarred road for 565 km followed by approximately 130 km of sand road to Mabuasehube, which is negotiable by 4 x 4 vehicles only.

3. What is its size?

The combined land area of the KTP is about 38 000 km², of which 28 400 km² lies in Botswana and 9 600 km² in South Africa.

4. Where can one get fuel on the way to the Park?

There are petrol stations at the following places on the way to the Park (if travelling from Gaborone):

Route 1: Gaborone, Jwaneng, Sekoma, Werda, Tsabong, Bokspits and Twee Rivieren

Route 2: Gaborone, Jwaneng, Sekoma, Kang, Hukuntsi

From the south (Upington) or south-east (Kuruman, Hotazel, Vanzylsrus, Askham) fuel is readily available.

Fuel is available in the KTP at Twee Rivieren.

5. What is the weather like?

The region is arid, with an annual rainfall of about 200 mm, mainly between January and April. In summer temperatures may exceed 40 C. In winter days are sunny with night temperatures often below zero.

6. When was the KTP commissioned?

The Bilateral Agreement between Botswana and South Africa was signed on 7th April 1999 and the Transfrontier Park was officially launched on 12th May 2000.

7. The KTP is made up of Parks from Botswana and South Africa: when were they established?

Gemsbok National Park (Botswana) was established in 1938 and the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (South Africa) was established in 1931.

8. What was the main motivation for its creation?

Through this joint venture, Botswana and South Africa are able to guarantee the long-term conservation of the valuable wildlife resources in the southern Kalahari, thus helping to maintain the integrity of the entire Kalahari ecosystem. Both countries will benefit from the pooling of expertise and experience in park management. The two countries will raise the international profile of this important conservation area through joint promotional campaigns, thereby enhancing its status and potential as a sought after tourist destination.

9. What animals can be seen in the KTP?

The KTP boasts Africa's big wild cats - lion, cheetah, and leopard. Brown and spotted hyenas and many other desert-adapted species such as gemsbok, springbok, blue wildebeest, eland, red hartebeest, suricates and ostrich are also to be found in the area.

10. What about accommodation facilities?

There are three rest camps, namely Twee Rivieren, Mata Mata and Nossob, each featuring six-bed self-catering cottages. Only the cottages at Twee Rivieren are air-conditioned.

Camping facilities are available at Two Rivers, Rooiputs and Polentswa. These offer basic amenities such as ablution blocks and shade structures but at Polentswa campers are required to provide their own water. The Mabuasehube area also offers camping at seven sites, namely Mabuasehube Entrance, Monamodi, Lesholoago, Mpaathutlwa, Mabuasehube Pan, Khiding Pan, and Bosobogolo.

11. Is it possible to travel from Two Rivers to Mabuasehube using the Wilderness Trail?

Not yet, but Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks is planning to link the Nossob Valley to Mabuasehube with a new trail by 2001.

12. Are tourists required to carry a passport between the two countries when in the park or are there customs and immigration points in the park?

You do not need to take a passport to use the Transfrontier Park. You may enter from either country and enjoy all the facilities. However, you must return into the country from which you entered. There are plans to set up a common entry point with customs and immigration facilities so that tourists may enter from one country and exit through another but this facility will take a year or two to be put in place.

13. Is it possible to pay park fees by credit card?

On the Botswana side, fees must be paid in Botswana Pula, but credit cards can be used on the South African side.

14. Are tourists allowed to camp on South African side before going on the Wilderness Trail?

Tourists are now permitted to travel to the Park and to stay on either side of the Park. However, it is still necessary to make separate bookings with reservations offices in the respective countries, for the periods to be spent in either country.

For more information, please contact:

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