NAMAQUA NATIONAL PARK

Located approximately 22 km west of Kammieskroon.

Rules and logistics

- The Park gates are open from 08:00 to 17:00.
- Check in is at the Skilpad Office.
- At present the Park has only a limited road network available to sedan vehicles.
- No shop, restaurant or fuel is available in the Namaqua National Park and guests must take along their own firewood.
- Accommodation at Skilpad, Kamieskroon and the Soebatsfontein Guest house.
- It is an offence to pick flowers or to remove plants or any other material from the park.

Claims to fame

- Namaqua National Park is situated in the world's only arid biodiversity hotspot.
- It is home to the world's smallest tortoise, the Namaqua Speckled Padloper.
- It conserves the world's richest succulent flora.
- It is world renowned for its spectacular spring flower displays.
- The Namaqua National Park will be extended by 36,000 ha. This was made possible by De Beers Consolidated Mines which will be leasing the area between the Groen and the Spoeg Rivers to Sanparks for the next 99 years. Hereby the Park becomes the 5th largest of the National Parks in South Africa, stretching all the way to the coast.

Climate

Namaqualand falls within the winter rainfall region of South Africa. The highest rainfall period is between June to August. Average winter temperatures vary between 7 degrees and 19 degrees Celsius, while summer temperatures vary between 20 degrees and 32 degrees Celsius.

Topography

The topography is characterized by granite outcrops with large round or flat exposed rock separated by sandy alluvial valleys. Four of the highest peaks exceed 1 500 m of which Rooiberg is the highest at 1 700 m.
Vegetation

The park has been described as typical Namaqualand broken veld with a great variety of smaller succulents, annuals and bulbous plants. It is also falls within the Succulent Karoo biome.

Mammals

More than 40 species occur, including the following:

Cape Golden Mole (Kaapse gouemol), Cape Rock Elephant Shrew (Kaapse kliplkaasneus), Cape Hare (Vlakhaas), Bat-eared fox (Bakoorjakkals), striped Palecat (Stinkmuishond), Suricate (Stokstertmerkat), Aardwolf (Maanhaarjakkals), Caracal (Rookkat), Common (Grey) Duiker (Gewone duiker), Steenbuck (Steenbok) and Springbuck (Springbok).

Birds

More than 120 species have been identified.

Tortoises

Angulate Tortoise (Ploegskaarskipad)  
Speckled Padloper (Gespikkelde padloper)

Snakes

The most dangerous are the Puffadder and Cape Cobra. Harmless snakes such as the Brown House Snake and Mole snake also occur.

Lizards

Boast almost 20 species, including the Namaqua chameleon (Chamaeleo namaquensis), Karoo Girdled Lizard (Cordylus polyzonus), Cape Skink (Mabuya capensis), Namaqua Sand Lizard (Pedioplanis namaquensis) and the Cape Dwarf Burrowing Skink (Scelotes caffer).

Frogs and toads

Karoo Toad (Bufo gariepensis), Common Caco (Cacosternum boettgeri), Cape River Frog (Rana fuscigula), Spotted Grass Frog (Rana grayii), Cape Sand Frog (Tomopterna delalandii)

For detailed checklists for the above visit www.sanparks.org.
Soebatsfontein | Population: | Altitude: 184m/604ft | Namaqualand
---|---|---|---
Rainfall: | |

From the N7, a gravel road from Kamieskroon leads to Soebatsfontein (48km).

**The Legend of Soebatsfontein ('Pleading fountain')**

The name, Soebatsfontein, is linked to a story that took place in the late 1800s. At that time mainly indigenous hunters and herders, the San, inhabited the western, lowland part of the Namaqualand. The San lived mainly as nomadic hunters and knew this place as one of the rare water sources in the region. For a long time the indigenous people of the area regarded the fountain and its water as sacred. When the first colonial settlers migrated northwards from the Cape Colony, Mr. Siebritz, a European, and his Khoi-Khoi companion settled at this fountain, which was one of the few fertile areas in the region.

One day a group of local nomads passed by the fountain. They got so angry about the desecration of the holy water by Mr. Siebritz and his companion, that they caught them and shackled them and all their attempts to negotiate, all pleadings and begging were in vain. There was no mercy. They were brought to a site, which is known nowadays as the historical rock of Soebatsfontein. The 'catching of the devil' was a big celebration. Throughout the ceremony Mr. Siebritz and his companion begged for their lives, but still they were shown no mercy. In the end Mr. Siebritz paid with his life.

During the ceremony his Khoi companion managed to escape. He told the other colonial settlers of the murder of Mr. Siebritz. They assembled a commando and banished the San from the fountain. The San fled in the direction of Annenous.

Years later, the first farmers who settled in this area heard this story and created a name in commemoration of Mr. Siebritz and his companion. The Afrikaans word ‘soebat’ means ‘to plead for something’ and so the surrounding area was called Soebatters Vlakte (Pleaders Plain). The story, however, took place at the fountain; therefore the village surrounding the fountain was called Soebatsfontein (Information – Soebatsfontein).

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**Attractions and activities**

- This is also the alternative entrance/exit to the Skilpad Nature Reserve.
Komaggas | Population: | Altitude: 532m/1745ft | Namaqualand Rainfall: |

On route R355 (gravel road), approximately 30km west of Springbok beyond Spektakel ('spectacle') Pass and near the Spektakel copper mine.

It is located in a ravine where a strong spring feeds the Komaggas River.

**Origin**
- It was founded as a London Missionary Society station by JH Schmelen in 1829.
- In 1843, it was transferred to the Rhenish Mission Society.
- When Namaqualand became an independent magisterial district in 1856, the village was designated the seat of the first civil commissioner.
- In 1936, it was handed over to the Dutch Reformed Church.

**Name**
- Different theories for the derivation of the name:
  - For the Nama, the layers of red slate at the spring could have resembled the multiple folds of a ruminant's third stomach, and the name would then mean 'abundance of maws of animals', from "khom-s" ('maw') and xa ('many').
  - **Second theory**: scholars have suggested that the name should be taken to mean 'the place where many wild olives grow' from "lgom-s" which means 'wild olives'.
- Legend tells that the name of both the pass and mine Spektakel is believed to refer to a long-ago incident when an ox-wagon careened out of control in the pass and overturned, catapulting its female passengers in all directions to create quite a spectacle.
- "Wilde Perde hoek" (Retha de Beer, 2008)

**Agriculture**
- Mainly sheep farming.

**Mining and industries**
- Wool is spun and woven at a local cottage industry enterprise.

**Historical sites and monuments**
- Located all over the region.
- These clay ovens were used by the Namas for cooking and baking.
Goodhouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population:</th>
<th>Altitude: 201m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainfall: 50 mm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Namaqualand</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It is approximately 100km northeast from Springbok (15 km east of the N14, then 85km north east of Concordia on a gravel road). The settlement is situated on the Orange River defining the South African / Namibian border.

**Origin**

- Developed around a fording place that is still in use today.
- In 1913, Carl Weidner settled at Goodhouse as partner in and manager of an agricultural settlement on both sides of the river. He was a member of the family who began to mine the corundum-sillimanite mineral at Pella.
- When the venture failed, he received a portion of land (named Hakiesdoring) on the north-bank.
- Soon he developed the 86 ha into mango, citrus and papaw plantations.
- He also built a pontoon that transported people and livestock until the mid 1950s, when a new bridge was built at Vioolsdrift (60 km to the west.)

**Name**

Probably a corruption of the Khoe expression Gudaos - Gu (‘sheep) and daos (‘path’ or ‘pass’. This was the place where the Khoe crossed the river with their sheep while migrating between the Little and Great Namaqualand.

**Claims to fame**

**Hot, hot, hot!**

- It is one of the hottest places in the country and the local weather station regularly reports higher temperatures than any other station.
- The average temperature in January is 39.9°C.
- The average maximum for the year is 31.7 °C.
- It also boasts the highest temperature ever recorded in South Africa, a staggering 52°C!

**Agriculture**

**Water supply**

Dependent upon irrigation schemes linked to the Orange River. The pumping station at the town also provides water for the towns of Steinkopf, Okiep, Springbok and Kleinzee.

- Under the new political dispensation, 55 small famers (including 12 women, each received 10 ha of land to cultivate paprika. The crop is taken to Springbok where it is processed into oil and various spices.
- Dates, citrus, mango and pawpaw.

**Attractions and activities**

Known for its mountain scenery and geology.
On route R358, a gravel road approximately 52 km from Pofadder.

Situate on the banks of the Orange River / Namibian Border.

**Origin**

- In 1909, a prospector by the name of Edwells, was the first white man to move into this area.
- A syndicate of farmers bought 12 000 ha of land from Edwells in 1916.
- A 10-km irrigation canal was built from the river and 63 plots of 8 ha each were surveyed.
- The bridge across the Orange River into Namibia was opened in 1962.

**Name**

Two possible explanations exist.

- It is a corruption of a combination of three Khoe words:
  - o fconsipe (‘an elbow projecting into the river’)
  - o nias (‘rocky surface’)
  - o fcaans (‘thorn-trees’).
  - o Derived

- Derived from a Khoe expression meaning ‘watering place for cattle’

It was later renamed Oranjedal but this name never came into use.

**Agriculture**

- Main crops were citrus fruit, lucerne, cotton and legumes.
POFADDER | Population: | Altitude: Rainfall: 80 mm p.a. in a good year. | Namaqualand
---|---|---|---

**On route N14, 175km west of Kakamas**

**Origin**

- The Reverend Christian Schröder established a mission station for the Korana Khoe in 1875.
- A perennial spring provided plenty of water and this also attracted white settlers to the area. They started arriving some fifteen years later.
- Officially, the village was to be established on a portion of land on the farm Namies, 30 km southwest of presentday Pofadder. The land was granted to the Dutch Reformed Church for this purpose but the plans never materialised.
- The first plots were surveyed around the spring and sold in 1917.
- In 1936 it was proclaimed a township.

The spring has since dried up and today the town receives its water from the Orange River through a purification plant near Pella.

**Name**

- The village was initially named Theronsville (after a parliament member of Prieska) after, but the locals preferred to call it ‘Pofadder’.

- The name does not refer to the highly poisonous snake, the Puffadder (Pofadder in Afrikaans). It was named in honour of the Korana Chief, Klaas Pofadder. Klaas had his main settlements on the islands in the Oranje River but frequently spent time at the water spring. He launched many raids on other tribes and farmers from here. He was killed in 1875 and was buried at Pofadder.

**Claims to fame**

Many people in South Africa have heard of Pofadder, or know jokes about the name. (However, very few have actually visited the town).

**Economical activities**

- Mainly Karakul sheep
- Employment opportunities were created by the Catholic Church who established a church and convent here in 1921. Activities include dairy and chicken farming, as well as a block making business, offering employment opportunities to residents.
### Historical sites and monuments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Site</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voortrekker Centenary monument</td>
<td>Commemorating the Groot Trek</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Ot Van Schalkwyk Park</td>
<td>In honour of the doctor who served the community from 1956-1989.</td>
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### Attractions and activities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</table>
| Massive communal nests        | - Along the N12 towards Upington.  
- Weaver birds (*Philetairus socius*) are very social and build massive communal nests, usually in Camel thorn trees or telephone poles (where trees are scarce).  
- A single nest may have up to fifty chambers with openings facing the ground to safeguard against predators.  
- Up to 300 birds, including chicks, can reside in such a community.  
- The nest resembles a thatched roof.  
- The inside temperature varies from 30°C in summer, dropping to 15 °C in winter.  
- Sometimes pygmy falcons, which are unable to survive the harsh winters in the desert without shelter, temporarily move in with the weavers. They fulfil the function of keeping unwanted insects and lizards out of the nests and therefore are tolerated by their hosts. |
PELLA

|-------------|-----------|--------------------------------|

Approximately 15km west of Pofadder and 90km from Aggeneys. It can be reached via a minor dirt road from the N14.

Located in the foothills of the Pella mountain, 10 km from the Orange River

**Origin**

- In 1814, the London Missionary Society founded the station as a sanctuary for adherents who had fled from Warmbad (Namibia), 72 km to the north. Jager Afrikaner, a Khoe chief, was responsible for sacking Warmbad after a dispute.
- The mission station was however abandoned after the murder of the missionary and his family.
- The Rhenish Missionary Society stepped in until 1869.
- Control passed to the Roman Catholic Church in 1974.
- At the time, there were only a small building that served as accommodation and the rectory became the chapel and school.

The nomadic lifestyle of the converts at Pella was detrimental to the missionaries' efforts. In 1886, Bishop Leonard from the Cape devised a plan. On his behest, the Government started subsidising the school and boarding facilities. This implied that the elderly and children could stay behind, while the rest left in search of grazing and water. Within time, a permanent settlement was established.

**Claims to fame**

**Convent and cathedral**

A new convent was built by Fathers Ceyte and Simon in 1883. They only used an Encyclopedia (the *Encyclopédie des Arts et Metiers*) as a building plan. The discovery of lime on the property also contributed to the completion of the four-roomed building.

Encouraged by their accomplishment, and with the help of the same Encyclopedia brought by Father Bécloute from France, their next project was a cathedral. It was completed within seven years and inaugurated in 1895. The cathedral is located next to the walled perennial spring.

A list of their determination and resourcefulness in order to obtain and bring the raw material to Pella (Dean, 2005).

- 220 Cart loads of stone for leveling the site.
- 400 Wagon loads of stone for the foundation.
- 500 Bricks at a time were transported by ox wagon from the river where they were made. Numerous journeys were made.
- 325 Bags of slaked lime were used for mortar. These were provided by the lime kilns that were constructed by them.
- 2 Wagon loads of willow wood from the river.

Another small miracle was a bell that was sent from France to South Africa without a delivery address. It was finally traced to Springbok – not too far away!
Dates

The hot and dry climate, with temperatures up to 50°C, is ideal for the growing of dates. The parent stock was imported from Morocco and California. The largest date plantation in South Africa with some 15 000 trees, are located at Klein Pella (owner Gert Nienaber), supplying work opportunities for the locals. Visitors interested in buying this plump sweet Pella dates, should take note that it is closed on a Sunday. The farm is located on the Gariep River, 24km from Pella and has a Guest House, with both chalets and camping.

Name

It was named after a town in Israel, east of the Jordan River. The Christians withdrew to the town after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD.

Economical activities

- Dates
- Other crops include figs, grapes, pomegranates and a variety of vegetables.
- Karakul and goats.
- Semiprecious stone, including rose and jasper, occur in abundance in the area.
- Since the Second World War, a mineral comprising of corundum and sillimanite, has been mined at Swartkoppies (south of Pella). It is used to make refractory bricks for furnaces for the steel and glass-manufacturing industries.
AGGENEYS | Population: | Altitude: | Rainfall: | Namaqualand
---|---|---|---|---

On route N14 154 km west of Pofadder, about 5km north on a gravel road.

Origin

- It used to be only a small settlement centered around a post office and general store.
- In the 1970s, rich deposits of lead, zinc, copper and silver was discovered in the Black Mountain (1099m), some 10km west of the village.
- These discoveries naturally called for mining operations and boosted the development of the town.

Name

- Probably originates from the Khoe word for ‘place of water’ referring to an oasis nearby.
- Other translations include ‘mountainous place’, ‘place of blood’ and ‘place of slaughter’.

Economical activities

- Anglo Base Metals Mining (Black Mountain)

Attractions

- Mine tours can be arranged (pre-booking essential)
- The red lark, other birds and animals that occupy the red dunes and crater close to the town.
- A eighteen hole golf course.
- A game camp
Resources and further reading


Dean, CM. Journey through the living deserts of South Africa. Dean & Associates Ltd. (2005).


Maps and brochures

Explorer Map South Africa. The Northern Cape – follow the sun not to the crowds.

EcoNews 24-Nov-2008 (50/50)

Weblsites

http://www.dwaf.gov.za/orange/Low_Orange/goodhouse

www.indexmundi.com (altitudes)

www.sanparks.org


www.thefreedictionary.com

Exploration and photos


Compiled by Maria Louise Kruger 2008