



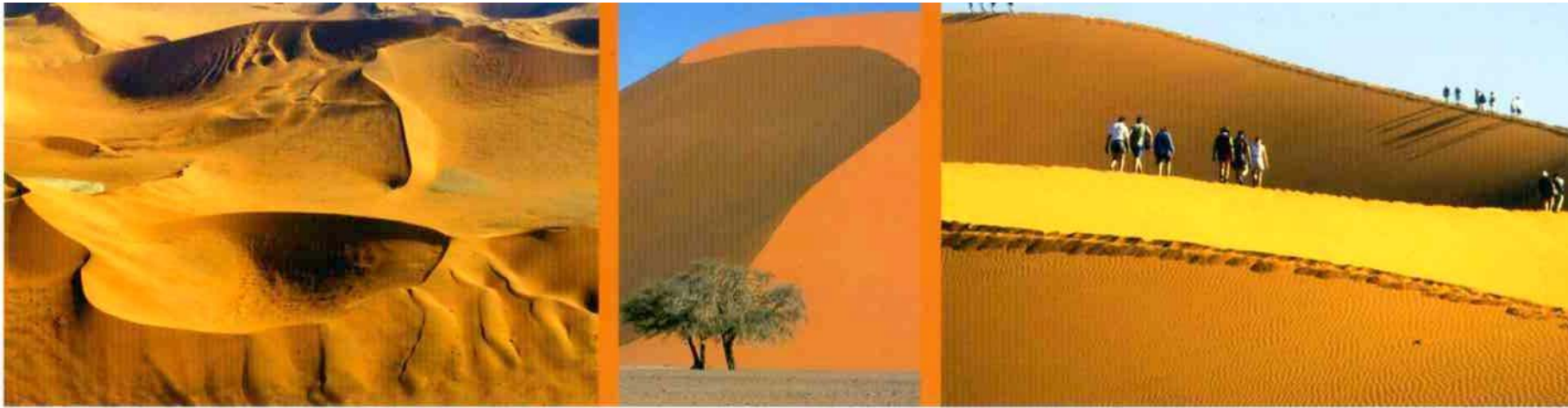
Sossusvlei

"Sossusvlei is magnificent. It's spectacular, it's home to the highest, most beautiful dunes in the world. It is all these things, but really, Sossusvlei is indescribable. You must see it to believe it."

Florance Karita • Park Ranger, Sossusvlei, Ministry of Environment and Tourism



Republic of Namibia
Ministry of Environment and Tourism



Discover Sossusvlei

Climb to the top of the highest sand dunes in the world, slide down them just for fun. Take in the endless vistas of the Namib sand sea, and challenge the inner artist or photographer in you to capture this spectacular landscape. Watch the sunrise over one of the oldest, driest places on earth. Be bewitched by the Southern Cross and the Milky Way, part of an astonishing depth of glittering constellations, stars and planets that bring magic to desert nights. Explore the depths of nearby Sesriem Canyon, and marvel at one of nature's unexplained mysteries – fairy circles, round, bare patches of sand that are found on sandy dune slopes from the Orange River to Angola. Scurry across dunes that are home to fog-basking beetles and lizards that swim in the sand. Learn more about one of the most captivating deserts on earth where plant and animal life has adapted to survive in extraordinary ways. Wiggle your toes into the cold sub-surface sand and experience the wonders of Sossusvlei.

On top of the world

Towering dunes, shimmering pans and an endless sea of sand, this is Sossusvlei. In the Nama language, Sossusvlei means 'the gathering place of water', but it is defined more by its lack of water. Located at the end point of the ephemeral Tsauchab River, Sossusvlei is a huge clay pan, enclosed by gigantic mountains of sand, including one of the highest dunes in the world, rising 325 metres above sea level. In this inspiring landscape, your imagination can run on and on just like the desert that spreads across more than 50 000 square kilometres. When the fog rolls in off of the Atlantic coast more than 70 kilometres away, it paints the dunes in streaks of ruby and rust and leaves a layer of moisture that supports an astonishing array of plant and animal life. A playground of gigantic proportions for humans and extraordinary creatures, such as barking geckos, sabre-horned gemsbok, and lizards that do a 'thermal dance', Sossusvlei is the high point of any trip to the Namib.





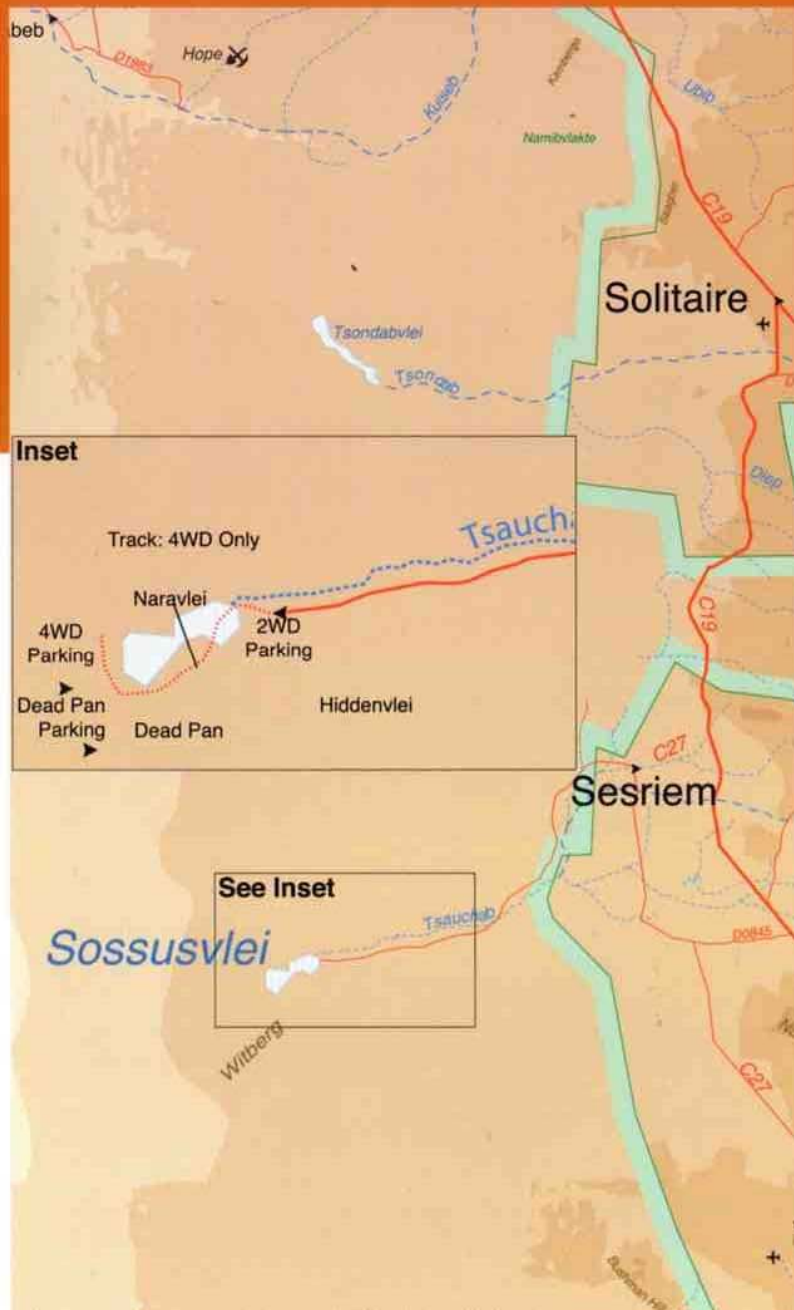
Hot spots

Like mirages coaxing the explorer to come closer, white pans shimmer in the dunes around Sossusvlei. With intriguing names like Hiddenvlei and Naravlei, and the highly photogenic Dead Pan, a large ghostly expanse of dried white clay, punctuated by skeletons of ancient camel-thorn trees, these are sunken treasures within the sea of sand. Dunes, shaped by strong south-westerly winds, come together at the top in a collection of crests that simulate stars. Scattered throughout the sand is a myriad of tracks left behind by spiders, lizards, insects and other creatures that tell the story of life that thrives under the most austere conditions. Sossusvlei and Sesriem are the best places to see dune larks - a megatrick in any birder's book. Nearby is Sesriem Canyon, where thousands of years of erosion expose layer upon layer of rock and time in a narrow gorge. At the foot of the gorge, which plunges down 30-40 metres, are pools that become replenished after good rains.

Secrets and science – exploring the Namib

The Namib Desert is one of the best-studied deserts in the world, thanks to more than 40 years of research conducted by scientists at the Gobabeb Research and Training Centre, a joint venture between the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia.

The dunes at Sossusvlei are just one part of the scenic mosaic that makes up the Namib-Naukluft Park, the largest conservation area in Africa, and fourth largest in the world. Beneath the dunes at Sossusvlei lies an ancient, fossilised dune desert dating back to between 40 and 20 million years. Over the years, this is just one of the many secrets the desert has bared. The confluence of mountains, sand dunes, ephemeral rivers and gravel plains that make up the Namib-Naukluft Park holds the promise of more discoveries waiting to be revealed, a prospect that will draw curious souls to the desert for decades to come.



Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- Keep to existing roads and tracks.
 - Do not litter.
 - Do not remove any plants or animals from the park.
 - Follow the rules and regulations as printed on your permit.
- Have fun!



Facilities:

Eighteen campsites, ablution blocks and scullery facilities are available at Sesriem. Petrol, diesel, firewood and cool drinks are also available here. The Namibia Wildlife Resorts facility, Sossus Dune Lodge, provides luxury accommodation in the park. For bookings, contact www.nwr.com.na. Permits for entry to the Namib-Naukluft Park are available at the Sesriem, Namib-i and Walvis-i tourism associations.

Getting there:

Located off the C 27, Sossusvlei is 591 km from Windhoek and 362 km from Swakopmund. The road from Sesriem to Sossusvlei is suitable for sedan cars, but the last 5-kilometre stretch is negotiable by 4x4 vehicles only. From the sedan car park, the nearest dunes are easily accessible on foot.

Fact file:

Proclamation date: The Namib Desert Park was established in 1907. In 1979, it was amalgamated with the Naukluft Mountain Zebra Park, sections of Diamond Area 2, and public land to create the Namib-Naukluft Park, an area that was extended again in 1990.

Size: 49 768 km²

Hours: sunrise to sunset

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