



Namibia

Red dunes above a foggy Atlantic coast, desert elephants and cheetahs, and a young nation that won its independence in 1990.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Windhoek

POPULATION

About 3 million (2023 census: 3,022,401)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

English, although only a few percent of Namibians speak it at home. Oshiwambo is the most common home language, and Afrikaans, Khoekhoegowab, the Kavango languages, Otjiherero, Silozi and German are also widely spoken

CURRENCY

Namibian dollar (NAD), divided into 100 cents and worth the same as the South African rand, which is also legal tender

AREA

About 825,615 km²

GOVERNMENT

Republic with a President elected directly by the voters for five-year terms, and a Parliament of two houses. The country is divided into 14 regions

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Königstein, the summit of the Brandberg massif, about 2,573 m

LONGEST RIVER

The Orange, about 2,400 km long, which forms the southern border with South Africa. All of Namibia's rivers that flow all year run along its borders

NEIGHBOURS

Angola, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa. In the far northeast Zimbabwe lies less than 200 m away across the Zambezi

DRIVES ON THE

Left

CALLING CODE

+264

A 45-minute trip to Namibia

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Namibia together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 1840: Jonker Afrikaner settles at Windhoek; 1966: The armed struggle begins; 2021: Germany recognises the genocide. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Kapana and Oshifima. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Wa lele po?" (Good morning (did you sleep well?)), "Wa uhala po?" (Good afternoon), "Wa tokelwa po?" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://preview.worldstroll.com/countries/namibia/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Namibia and its cities



- Windhoek (Khomas, in the centre): Christ Church and the Tintenpalast, the parliament building, The Alte Feste, the old German fort, Kapana grills in Katutura
- Walvis Bay (Erongo, on the Atlantic coast): The only natural deep-water harbour on the coast, Birdlife and the artificial Bird Island, Dune 7 and the salt works
- Swakopmund (Erongo, on the Atlantic coast): German colonial architecture, such as the Woermannhaus, Sandboarding and quad biking in the dunes, The jetty and the beach promenade
- Lüderitz (Karas, on the south coast): The Felsenkirche, a rock church consecrated in 1912, The ghost town of Kolmanskop nearby, Seals, penguins and flamingos
- Keetmanshoop (Karas, in the south): The Quiver Tree Forest nearby, Karakul sheep farming, A base for the Fish River Canyon

- Oshakati (Oshana, in the far north): Its large open market, Shopping for the whole northern region, The flat oshana flood plains around it
- Rundu (Kavango East, on the Angolan border): The Kavango River and the border with Angola, St Mary's Cathedral, The road east to the Caprivi Strip
- Katima Mulilo (Zambezi, in the Caprivi Strip): The Zambezi River, The largest open market in Namibia, The bridge to Zambia, opened in 2004
- Otjiwarongo (Otjozondjupa, in the centre-north): The Cheetah Conservation Fund, Game farms and nature reserves, A stop on the way to Etosha
- Tsumeb (Oshikoto, in the north): Rare mineral crystals, Its historic deep mine, The nearest town to Etosha
- Grootfontein (Otjozondjupa, in the north): The Hoba meteorite nearby, Farming in the Otavi Triangle, The road east to the Caprivi Strip
- Khorixas (Kunene, in the northwest): The Petrified Forest, The road to Twyfelfontein, Damara culture

A short history of Namibia

Namibia's dry lands have been home to San and Khoekhoe peoples for thousands of years, and rock slabs painted about 30,000 years ago in the Apollo 11 Cave are among the oldest figurative art in Africa. Bantu-speaking peoples arrived from around the 14th century, and Ovambo kingdoms grew up in the north. In the 1800s missionaries, traders and Oorlam groups from the Cape came in, and in 1884 Germany made the territory its colony. German rule brought war and genocide; South African rule after 1915 brought apartheid. The long struggle for independence ended in 1990.

1840 Jonker Afrikaner settles at Windhoek

Jonker Afrikaner, leader of the Oorlam people who had come north from the Cape, settled with his followers by the hot springs of Windhoek and built a stone church there that held 500 people. The first known written mention of the name Windhoek is in a letter he wrote in 1844.

1884 Germany claims the territory

On 24 April 1884 Germany placed the land bought by the Bremen merchant Adolf Lüderitz at Angra Pequena, today's Lüderitz, under its protection, and the German flag was raised there in August. The colony became German South West Africa. The harbour of Walvis Bay stayed British, as part of the Cape Colony.

1904 The Herero and Nama genocide

On 12 January 1904 the Herero rose up against German rule, and the Nama followed later that year. German troops under General Lothar von Trotha answered with a campaign of extermination: after the Battle of Waterberg in August 1904 many Herero were driven into the Omaheke desert, where large numbers died of thirst, and survivors were held in camps where about half the prisoners died. By 1908 around 80 percent of the Herero and half of the Nama had died.

1907 Etosha becomes a game reserve

In March 1907 the German governor proclaimed a large game reserve around the Etosha Pan. It became Etosha National Park in 1967 and is still Namibia's best-known wildlife park.

1908

Diamonds are found near Lüderitz

In 1908 the railway worker Zacharias Lewala found a diamond in the sand near Lüderitz and showed it to his supervisor, August Stauch. A diamond rush followed, the town of Kolmanskop grew up in the desert, and Germany closed off a vast area of the coast as the Sperrgebiet, the 'forbidden area'.

1915

South Africa takes control

During the First World War South African troops invaded the colony, and the German forces surrendered near Khorab on 9 July 1915. In 1920 the League of Nations gave South Africa a mandate to govern the territory, which it ran as South West Africa and later placed under apartheid laws.

1960

SWAPO is founded

On 19 April 1960 the South West Africa People's Organisation, SWAPO, was founded to campaign for the end of South African rule. As of 2026, it has governed Namibia ever since independence.

1966

The armed struggle begins

On 26 August 1966 South African forces attacked a SWAPO camp at Omugulugwombashe in the north, the first major clash of a war that lasted until independence. Namibians remember the day as Heroes' Day.

1978

UN Resolution 435

On 29 September 1978 the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 435, a plan for a ceasefire and UN-supervised elections leading to independence. It was carried out only after South Africa, Angola and Cuba signed the Tripartite Accord in December 1988.

1989

The first free election

From 7 to 11 November 1989 Namibians of all backgrounds voted together for the first time, under United Nations supervision, and just over 97 percent of registered voters took part. The Constituent Assembly they elected wrote the Constitution, adopted in February 1990.

1990

Independence

On 21 March 1990 Namibia became independent, the new flag was raised, and Sam Nujoma was sworn in as the first President in front of

guests from around the world, among them Nelson Mandela, released from prison the month before. 21 March is Independence Day.

1993

The Namibian dollar arrives

On 15 September 1993 the Bank of Namibia issued the first Namibian dollar banknotes. The new currency replaced the South African rand at the same value, and the rand remains legal tender alongside it.

1994

Walvis Bay returns

On 1 March 1994 South Africa handed Walvis Bay, the country's only natural deep-water harbour, and the small Penguin Islands over to Namibia. They had stayed under South African control after independence.

2021

Germany recognises the genocide

On 28 May 2021, after more than five years of talks with Namibia, Germany's foreign minister said that Germany would now officially call the events of 1904 to 1908 a genocide and would ask Namibia and the descendants of the victims for forgiveness. German officials had already used the word genocide in 2015. Germany offered 1.1 billion euros for development over 30 years. Many Herero and Nama leaders reject the deal, saying they were left out of the talks.

What people eat in Namibia

Namibian food follows two main paths. In the north, where most people live, the day's meal is oshifima, a stiff porridge of pearl millet or maize, eaten by hand with a relish of meat, wild spinach, dried fish or mopane worms. Across the whole country meat is plentiful, because the dry land is better for cattle, goats and sheep than for crops: it is grilled on the street as kapana, cooked for hours in a three-legged pot, or dried as biltong. German and Afrikaner settlers added dishes such as schnitzel and potjiekos, and the rains bring wild treats such as giant termite-hill mushrooms and Kalahari truffles.

Kapana

Windhoek, especially the Katutura township, and markets across Namibia

Small pieces of beef grilled on a hot metal plate over a wood fire at open-air markets, sold straight from the grill. It is dipped in a spice mix and eaten with a fresh salsa of onion, tomato and chilli, often with fat cakes. If you do not like it hot, say so.

Oshifima (oshifima (Oshiwambo))

Northern Namibia, from Ovambo cooking

A stiff porridge made from mahangu (pearl millet) flour, maize meal or a mix of both, and the most important food in the north. A small piece is pinched off with the right hand, shaped with the fingers and used to scoop up meat, spinach or sauce.

Wild spinach (omboga)

Northern Namibia

Leafy greens that grow wild in the mahangu fields, cooked as a relish to eat with oshifima. The leaves are also dried to keep for the dry months.

Mopane worms

Northern and northeastern Namibia, and much of southern Africa

The large caterpillars of the mopane emperor moth, picked from mopane trees after the rains, boiled in salt water and dried in the sun. They are eaten as a crunchy snack or soaked and cooked with onion, tomato and chilli to serve with porridge. They are rich in protein and sold dried at northern markets such as Oshakati's.

Kalahari truffles (nabbas)

The Kalahari in eastern Namibia

Wild desert truffles, up to about 12 cm across, that grow just under the sand after good rains and are found by the cracks they make in the ground. They have long been

gathered and eaten by the San and other peoples of the Kalahari.

Omajowa mushrooms (omajowa (Otjiherero))

Central and northern Namibia

Huge white mushrooms that push up around termite mounds after heavy summer rains, mostly from January to March. The caps can grow to 40 cm across. They are sold at the roadside and fried or grilled while fresh.

Biltong

All of Namibia, shared with South Africa

Strips of beef or game such as kudu or oryx, cured with salt, vinegar and spices and air-dried for several days. Namibians take it, and droewors (dried sausage), on long road trips. Because it is raw meat that is cured and dried rather than cooked, pregnant women are advised to avoid it.

Potjiekos

All of Namibia, from Afrikaner cooking

A stew of meat, vegetables and potatoes cooked slowly over a small fire in a three-legged cast-iron pot, the potjie. Lodges often cook one for their guests, and a host may make one for a special visit.

Fat cakes (vetkoek (Afrikaans), oukuki (Oshiwambo))

All of Namibia

Balls of yeast dough deep-fried until golden, sold by street vendors all over the country. In Namibia they are also called 'junkies'. They are eaten with kapana, split and filled with mince, or with jam.

Marathon chicken (Ovambo chicken)

Northern Namibia, from Ovambo homesteads

A stew of hardy free-range village chicken, boiled with a little water and salt and then fried in marula oil until tender and golden, a favourite of Ovambo homesteads, where the dish is cooked on an open fire.

Schnitzel

Windhoek, Swakopmund and German-Namibian homes, from German settlers

A thin slice of veal or pork, coated in breadcrumbs and fried golden, served with a lemon wedge and potatoes. It is one of the best-known dishes of German-Namibian cooking and appears on many restaurant menus.

Oshikundu (ontaku)

Northern Namibia and the Kavango region

A thick, brown drink made from mahangu flour, bran and malted sorghum mixed with warm water and left to ferment for a few hours. It is sold at markets and roadside stalls and must be drunk within about six hours, before it turns sour.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Wash your hands before eating.
- Eat oshifima with your right hand only: pinch off a piece, shape it with your fingers and use it to scoop up the relish.
- It is rude to refuse food outright. If you cannot eat more, decline politely, for example by saying you are full because you have just eaten.
- A host who offers home-made food or drink often tastes it first in front of you, to show that it is good.
- At kapana stalls and open markets the price is often open to friendly bargaining, but in shops and restaurants prices are fixed.

Kapana

Small pieces of beef grilled on a hot metal plate over a wood fire at open-air markets, sold straight from the grill. It is dipped in a spice mix and eaten with a fresh salsa of onion, tomato and chilli, often with fat cakes. If you do not like it hot, say so.

Ingredients

- 600 g tender beef (sirloin or rump), cut into bite-sized pieces
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 2 teaspoons braai or barbecue spice, or salt, black pepper, paprika and a pinch of chilli
- For the salsa: 1 onion, 2 tomatoes, 1 small green chilli (optional), 2 tablespoons oil, 1 tablespoon white vinegar and salt

Method

1. Make the salsa: chop the onion, tomatoes and chilli finely and mix with the oil, vinegar and a pinch of salt.
2. Heat a heavy frying pan, griddle or barbecue plate until very hot, and brush it with the oil.
3. Lay the beef pieces on the hot surface in one layer and cook for 5 to 10 minutes, turning them, until browned outside.
4. Put the spice mix in a small bowl. Dip each piece in the spice and eat it with a spoon of salsa, with fat cakes or bread.

Oshifima

A stiff porridge made from mahangu (pearl millet) flour, maize meal or a mix of both, and the most important food in the north. A small piece is pinched off with the right hand, shaped with the fingers and used to scoop up meat, spinach or sauce.

Ingredients

- 1 litre water
- About 300 g pearl millet (mahangu) flour, maize meal, or a mix of both
- A pinch of salt (optional)

Method

1. Bring the water to the boil in a heavy pot, with the salt if you use it.
2. Sprinkle in about a third of the flour while stirring hard with a wooden spoon, to make a thin porridge. Let it bubble for 2 or 3 minutes.
3. Add the rest of the flour a little at a time, stirring and pressing the mixture against the side of the pot, until it is thick, smooth and pulls away from the pot.
4. Cover and leave on a very low heat for 5 minutes. Shape into a mound with a wet spoon and serve with meat, wild spinach or a stew.

Potjiekos

A stew of meat, vegetables and potatoes cooked slowly over a small fire in a three-legged cast-iron pot, the potjie. Lodges often cook one for their guests, and a host may make one for a special visit.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1.5 kg lamb, goat or beef on the bone, cut into pieces
- 2 onions, chopped, and 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 teaspoons paprika, salt and pepper
- 500 ml beef stock
- 4 carrots, in thick slices
- 500 g potatoes, peeled and halved
- 250 g butternut squash or pumpkin, in chunks
- 150 g green beans or mushrooms

Method

1. Heat the oil in a cast-iron pot over a fire or on the stove, and brown the meat in batches. Add the onions and garlic and fry until soft.
2. Add the paprika, salt, pepper and stock, cover and simmer very gently for 1 to 1.5 hours, until the meat is nearly tender.
3. Lay the vegetables on top in layers: carrots and potatoes first, then squash, then beans or mushrooms. Do not stir.
4. Cover again and simmer for about 1 hour more, adding a little water if it runs dry, until the vegetables are soft. Serve straight from the pot with rice or bread.

Fat cakes

Balls of yeast dough deep-fried until golden, sold by street vendors all over the country. In Namibia they are also called 'junkies'. They are eaten with kapana, split and filled with mince, or with jam.

Ingredients

- 500 g plain flour
- 1 packet (10 g) instant dried yeast
- 1 tablespoon sugar and 1 teaspoon salt
- About 350 ml lukewarm water
- Oil for deep-frying

Method

1. Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and salt in a bowl. Add the water a little at a time and mix to a soft dough.
2. Knead for 5 minutes, cover and leave in a warm place for about 1 hour, until doubled in size.
3. Pinch off pieces the size of a small egg and roll them into balls.
4. Heat the oil in a deep pan to about 170 °C and fry a few balls at a time for 3 to 4 minutes, turning, until golden and cooked through. Drain on kitchen paper. Never leave hot oil unattended.

Useful phrases

Wa lele po?

wah LEH-leh poh · Good morning (did you sleep well?)

Wa uhala po?

wah oo-HAH-lah poh · Good afternoon

Wa tokelwa po?

wah toh-KEL-wah poh · Good evening

Nawa tuu?

NAH-wah TOO · Are you well?

Onawa.

oh-NAH-wah · I'm fine.

Tangi unene.

TAHN-gee oo-NEH-neh · Thank you very much.

Oikulya inyenye!

oy-KOOL-yah een-YEN-yeh · The food is very good!

Omeva oku li peni?

oh-MEH-vah oh-koo lee PEH-nee · Where is the water?

Kandi udite ko.

KAHN-dee oo-DEE-teh koh · I don't understand.

Kala po nawa.

KAH-lah poh NAH-wah · Stay well (goodbye).

Enda po nawa.

EN-dah poh NAH-wah · Go well (goodbye).

Goeie môre.

KHOO-yeh MAW-ruh · Good morning (Afrikaans)

Hoe gaan dit?

hoo KHAHN dit · How are you? (Afrikaans)

Goed, dankie.

khoot DUN-kee · Fine, thanks. (Afrikaans)

Asseblief.

AH-suh-bleef · Please. (Afrikaans)

Hoeveel kos dit?

HOO-feel kos dit · How much is this? (Afrikaans)

Die rekening, asseblief.

dee REE-uh-kuh-ning AH-suh-bleef · The bill, please. (Afrikaans)

Totsiens.

TOT-seens · Goodbye. (Afrikaans)

Things you might not know

1. The country is named after the Namib Desert. The word Namib comes from the Khoekhoe language and is usually translated as 'vast place'.
2. As of 2026, the Hoba meteorite near Grootfontein is the largest known meteorite in one piece, at more than 60 tonnes. It is so heavy that it has never been moved from the spot where it landed.
3. As of 2026, Namibia is home to the largest population of wild cheetahs in the world, and most of them live on farmland rather than in parks.
4. Namibia is one of the few countries that writes the protection of nature into its constitution: Article 95 commits the state to keeping ecosystems and wildlife healthy for present and future Namibians.
5. As of 2026, Namibia is one of the most thinly populated countries in the world, with fewer than 4 people per square kilometre.
6. The welwitschia, a desert plant that grows only two leaves in its whole life, can live for well over a thousand years. It appears on Namibia's coat of arms.
7. The dead camel thorn trees of Deadvlei have been standing for about 600 to 700 years; the desert air is so dry that their wood has not rotted away.
8. The Skeleton Coast takes its name from the whale and seal bones that once covered its beaches and from the many shipwrecks along it. The name became popular through a book published in 1944.
9. Himba women in the northwest cover their skin and hair with otjize, a paste of butterfat and red ochre that gives them their famous reddish colour.
10. Married Herero women often wear long, high-necked dresses with many petticoats, adapted from the fashions of the German colonial era, together with a headdress shaped like the horns of a cow.
11. The Tropic of Capricorn cuts Namibia roughly in half, and the country gets more than 300 days of sunshine a year.
12. The Namibian dollar is always worth exactly one South African rand, and shops in Namibia accept both.
13. Namibia's flag, adopted at independence on 21 March 1990, shows a golden sun with twelve rays in a blue triangle, divided from a green triangle

by a red band edged in white.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Namibia, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Kapana or Oshifima? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The Namibian dollar arrives (1993). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Walvis Bay returns (1994). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Sossusvlei, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Namibia, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Namibia?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. What do most visitors come to see at Cape Cross on the Skeleton Coast?

- A) Namibia's highest mountain
- B) A ghost town of diamond miners
- C) The parliament building
- D) A huge colony of Cape fur seals

2. Since independence in 1990, which language has been Namibia's only official language?

- A) Oshiwambo
- B) Afrikaans
- C) English
- D) German

3. Walvis Bay became part of Namibia on the day of independence in 1990.

- A) True
- B) False

4. Which of these dishes came to Namibia with German settlers?

- A) Oshikundu
- B) Kapana
- C) Oshifima
- D) Schnitzel

5. In Oshikwanyama, 'Enda po nawa' is said to someone who is staying behind while you leave.

- A) True
- B) False

6. Swakopmund was founded in 1892 as the main harbour of German South West Africa.

- A) True
- B) False

7. Where do the giant omajowa mushrooms appear after heavy summer rains?

- A) Inside the Fish River Canyon
- B) On the beaches of the Skeleton Coast
- C) Around termite mounds
- D) On the branches of mopane trees

8. In Namibian English, a 'robot' is a traffic light.

- A) True
- B) False

9. Which European country made Namibia its colony in 1884?

- A) France
- B) Portugal
- C) Germany
- D) Belgium

10. The ghost town of Kolmanskop grew up after the discovery of what?

- A) Oil
- B) Diamonds
- C) Gold
- D) Copper

11. As of 2026, Namibia has the world's largest wild population of which wild cat?

- A) Lion
- B) Tiger
- C) Cheetah
- D) Leopard

12. The sun on Namibia's flag has twelve rays.

- A) True
- B) False

Quiz answers

1. D) A huge colony of Cape fur seals

Cape Cross is a seal reserve with a huge colony of Cape fur seals, and replicas of the stone cross that Diogo Cão set up in 1486.

2. C) English

English is the only official language, although few Namibians speak it at home. Oshiwambo is the most common home language, and Afrikaans and German were official before 1990.

3. False

False. Walvis Bay stayed under South African control after independence and was handed over to Namibia on 1 March 1994.

4. D) Schnitzel

Schnitzel is a German and Austrian dish that settlers brought to Namibia. Kapana, oshifima and oshikundu are Namibian foods.

5. False

False. 'Enda po nawa' (go well) is said to someone who is leaving. To someone who stays, you say 'Kala po nawa' (stay well).

6. True

True. The Germans founded Swakopmund in 1892 because the natural harbour at Walvis Bay belonged to the British.

7. C) Around termite mounds

Omajowa grow around termite mounds, mostly from January to March, and their caps can reach 40 cm across.

8. True

True. As in South Africa, traffic lights are called robots, so a sign saying 'robots ahead' warns of traffic lights.

9. C) Germany

Germany made the territory its colony in 1884 under the name German South West Africa, and ruled it until 1915.

10. B) Diamonds

Diamonds were found near Lüderitz in 1908, and German miners built Kolmanskop in the desert. When richer fields were found further south, the town was abandoned.

11. C) Cheetah

Namibia has the largest wild cheetah population in the world, most of it living on farmland.

12. True

True. The golden sun with twelve rays sits in the blue triangle of the flag adopted at independence in 1990.

Namibia visa page

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