

Introduction

Conjure up a desolate and forbidding landscape, seemingly devoid of life, except for some people dotting along the horizon.

Make a startling discovery upon closer inspection when the mirage dissolves into the human-like half-mens (half person) and the harsh environment prove to be a treasure-chest containing the world's richest desert flora. Miniature rock gardens, perfectly designed by nature, cling precariously to cliff faces. Tiny succulents, mere pinpoints against a backdrop of surreal rock formations, revel in the moisture brought by the early morning fog rolling in from the cold Atlantic Ocean.

Rugged kloofs, high mountains and dramatic landscapes that sweep away inland from the Orange River divulge the fact that you are now in the vast mountain desert that is the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld National Park, an area managed jointly by the local Nama people and the South African National Parks. This is a harsh and unpredictable land where water is scarce and life-sustaining moisture comes in the form of early morning fog – called 'lhuries' or 'Malmokkies' by the local people – which rolls in from the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean, sustaining a remarkable range of small reptiles, birds and mammals. A staggering assortment of plant life, some species occurring nowhere else, is to be found here, with gnarled quiver trees, tall aloes and quaint 'half-mens' keeping vigil over this inscrutable landscape.

The park is only accessible by means of a 4x4 vehicle, but vehicles with high clearances such as combi's and LDV's do travel in the park. Sedan vehicles are not permitted. There is no specific route that can be booked in advance.

5 Things To Seek

- Rock Hyrax
- Ground Squirrel
- Jackal Buzzard
- Half-men (Half Human)
- Hartmann's Mountain Zebra

Accommodation

Sendelingsdrif Rest Camp

- A new rest camp has been built which consists of ten chalets (4 x 4 bed units and 6 x 2 bed units).
- All chalets are equipped with air conditioning, fridge and two plate electric stoves.
- All units have showers, front porches with views over the Gariep (Orange River) and there is a swimming pool in the camp.

There is still landscaping work being done and some further construction work is planned.

Potjiespram Rest Camp

- New ablutions have been built and showers (cold water only) are available.
- There are 18 Campsites and an Environmental Education Centre where school groups can stay over in traditional Nama huts.

De Hoop Camp Site

- This remains one of the most popular spots in the park and ablutions (cold showers) have been built to service 12 Campsites.

Richtersburg Camp Site

- As for De Hoop, this camp, which lies on the banks of the river, has been upgraded with ablutions (cold showers) to service 12 Campsites.

Kokerboomkloof Camp Site

- The 8 camp sites are serviced by dry toilets.
- No water is available on site and the nearest water point is at Richtersberg (32km) away.
- Toilets available
- Access through Sendelingsdrift
- No power
- No shower / wash facilities
- Very rustic

Tatasberg and Ganakouriep Wilderness Camps

Each camp consists of:

- 4 x 2-bed self catering units with showers,
- 12 volt lighting system,
- fridges and gas stoves (hot and cold water).
- Should problems occur with the lights, paraffin lanterns are available.
- A caretaker is resident on site.
- The units will be swept out and the area kept clean but the washing of utensils and making of beds will be the responsibility of the guests for the duration of their stay.

Please note that the water at Ganakoeriep, Tatasberg and Hakkiesdoring is not suitable for drinking and it is recommended that guests should provide their own drinking water.

Hakkiesdoring Wilderness Camp

No information available at present.

Hiking Trails Base Camp

The Hiking Trails Base Camp, which is situated in the panoramic Ganakouriep Valley and accommodates 9 people opened in mid-July. Gas stoves, fridges and hot showers are available. The hiking trail itself is not open due to a shortage of qualified guides but groups under the control of an appropriately qualified guide may be allowed to hike.

It is strongly recommended that they take a person with extensive knowledge of the area with them to enhance their experience and minimise the risks associated with this terrain and climate.

Bookings: This unit will be taken three months in advance until such time as the trails issue has been resolved. It is also an ideal location from which to explore the Park by vehicle. Note that the water is not suitable for drinking and it is recommended that guests should bring their own drinking water.

To view the accommodation prices, refer to [Tariffs](#)

Activities & Facilities

Activities

Adventure and Outdoor Activities

- Flowering season – experience the springtime floral splendour of the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld area (between June and October, depending on good rains).
- Bird watching – almost 200 species in the park.

Guided Trails

- Vensterval Trail (4 days, 3 nights)
- Lelieshoek-Oemsberg Trail (3 days, 2 nights)
- Kodaspiek Trail (2 days, 1 night)
- The above mentioned are only available from 1 April to 30 September
- Guided walking trails will be conducted from a base camp called Hakiesdoring hiking camp soon.

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Bookings

This unit will be taken three months in advance until such time as the trails issue has been resolved. It is also an ideal location from which to explore the Park by vehicle. Note that the water is not suitable for drinking and it is recommended that guests should bring their own drinking water. The cost of this unit is R600 for the first four people and R100 for each subsequent person.

Facilities

No shops in the park, but fuel and cold drinks can be purchased at a small general store at Sendelingsdrift. The shop is open on weekdays only.

Pontoon at Sendelingsdrif

****Pontoon is now closed with immediate effect.**** The old pont, that was last in service in 1988, when South West Africa (now Namibia) was still governed by South Africa, has been restored and offers an unusual and convenient way of crossing the Garib (Orange) River that separates the two countries. Before the opening of this border a very inconvenient 485km detour and about 4 hours drive had to be undertaken to cross from one side of the Park to the other.

Pont Regulations:

Maximum carrying capacity is 6 Metric Tones or:

- 2 standard 4x4 vehicles without trailers
- 1 standard 4x4 vehicle with trailer
- 2 standard light motor vehicles with trailers
- 1 bus with a seating capacity of less than 20

Hours:

Summer and winter: 8:00 – 16:15 (weather permitting)

For further information please phone the the park on 027 831 1506

Fuel hours

- Monday – Friday: 07:30 – 18:00
- Saturday : 08:00 – 16:00
- Sunday: 08:30 – 13:00

Natural and Cultural History

An international treaty, signed on 1 August 2003, incorporated the Ai–Ais Hot Springs Game Park in Namibia and |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld National Park in South Africa, resulting in the establishment of the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier National Park.

One of the main features of the combined park is the world's second largest canyon – the Fish River Canyon. At Sendelingsdrift, on the South African side, a pontoon has been established to ferry people and vehicles across the Orange River. The pontoon has a carrying capacity of a 32-seater bus or two fully loaded double cab 4x4 vehicles.

How to get there

Recommended routes to and from the park

The quickest way to get to the Park from N7 (RSA) and B1 (Namibia) is to turn off at Steinkopf and approach via Port Nolloth and Alexander Bay with only the last 80km being on dirt.

For those wishing to vary their route and get a broader picture of the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld the road from Violsdrift, via Kotzehoop, through spectacular scenery to Eksteenfontein and then on to Sendelingsdrift is one well worth traveling. (If you take this route please respect the interests of the Kotzehoop farmers whose crops are affected by the dust from speeding vehicles.)

- The scenic route via Kuboes, Lekkering and Eksteenfontein provides an additional dimension of what the region has to offer.
- Another spectacular route, recommended for 4x4 vehicles only, is over the mountain pass via Helskloof Reserve between Eksteenfontein and Violsdrift.
- Admission and overnight permits must be obtained at the park office at Sendelingsdrift before entering the park.
- Overnight visitors must arrive before 16:00 to reach camping sites before dark.
- Internal roads are 'farm tracks', mainly suited to 4x4 vehicles, but vehicles with high clearances such as kombis and LDV's do travel in the park. Sedan vehicles are not permitted.
- Due to deep-sanded riverbeds and rough mountain passes, driving in convoy is recommended.
- Single vehicles must sign an agreement to report back to park headquarters on departure.

- The old pont, that was last in service in 1988, when South West Africa (now Namibia) was still governed by South Africa, has been restored and offers an unusual and convenient way of crossing the Garib (Orange) River that separates the two countries. Before the opening of this border a very inconvenient 485km detour and about 4 hours drive had to be undertaken to cross from one side of the Park to the other.
- Driving in the park at night is not permitted.

Gate Hours

- 1 October to 30 April: 07:00 – 19:00
- 1 May to 30 September: 07:00 – 18:00

Distances to the park (Sendelingsdrif)

From:

Cape Town - 875km Upington - 720km [Johannesburg](#) - 1 595km Durban - 1 992km Springbok - 320km Port Nolloth - 180km Alexander Bay - 90km

Distances in the park

- Sendelingsdrif – Helskloof Entry Gate - 22km (25 min)
- Helskloof Gate-Kokerboomkloof - 78.3km
- Helskloof Gate-Richtersberg - 68.5km
- Helskloof Gate- De Hoop - 53.7km
- Richtersberg – De Hoop - 8.1km (Deep sand and sharp rocks)
- Sendelingsdrif-Potjiespram - 9km
- Sendelingsdrif-De Hoop - 38.2km Sendelingsdrif / Richtersberg / Kokerboomkloof / Helskloof / Sendelingsdrif - 203km (9 hrs)

The Sendelingsdrif RSA / Namibia Borderpost and Pont

More information will be available soon.

Park Map



(Please note: Enlarged map may take time to download)

Tariffs

- [General Tariffs Information](#)
- [Pensioners' Discount](#)
- [Daily Conservation Fee](#)
- *Members of SANParks' loyalty programme WILD do not pay conservation fees provided that proof of Identity and their WILD card are shown on arrival.*
- [Cost of a Wild Card](#)
- [View accommodation pictures and availability for each camp](#)

Conservation Fees for 1 November 2011 to 31 October 2012

South African Citizens and Residents (with ID):	R48 per adult per day R24 per child, per day
SADC Nationals (with passport):	R75 per adult, per day R48 per child, per day
Standard Conservation Fee (Foreign Visitors):	R130 per adult, per day R65 per child, per day

Vital Information

Climate

Please note that heavy dew sometimes occurs at night.

The |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld climate is harsh and dry, with extreme temperatures of up to 53 degrees Celsius having been recorded in mid-summer. Activities should be restricted to early mornings and late afternoons. Nights are cool, but may become chilly during winter. Heavy night-time dew occurs in the park.

Day Visitors

Because of the great distance involved in getting to the park, day visitation is not recommended unless some form of accommodation is secured in the area.

Petrol and diesel

Diesel and LRP 95 fuel is available at Sendelingsdrif. Note that Lead Free Petrol is not available. The nearest supply of Unleaded Petrol is at Alexander Bay - 80km.

- Fuel Station hours: Everyday from 08:00 to 16:00
- Vehicle fuel is available in all parks (or is available on the park periphery)
- No Unleaded fuel is available.
- No oil is available.
- South African legislation stipulates that fuel stations will accept legitimate *petrol/fuel/garage/credit cards* or cash as a form of payment for any fuel purchase.

Telephones

Cellular reception is only available at the park's Reception area or in Sendelingsdrif. Currently Cell C, MTN and Vodacom networks are available in Sendelingsdrif. A Public Phone (Coin Operated) is available at Sendelingsdrif. A satellite phones (if you have available) is also recommended.

Shop and Restaurant

A private shop is available (Trans Hex). There is no restaurant facility.

Office Hours

- 08:00 – 16:00 at Sendelingsdrif

Wild Card Information

- Wild Cards are strictly limited to the Republic of South Africa , in terms of our Transfrontier Park agreement.
- A Wild Card may be used in all Wild Card clusters as specified within the registration information.
- A Wild Card is limited to certain parks within the borders of Southern Africa.
- No Wild Cards will be accepted at |Ai-|Ais Hot Springs or Hobas.

Hints & Tips

- Insect Repellent is strongly recommended
- Binoculars and cameras are a must
- Cotton sheets will keep insects at bay.
- Plastic refuse bags are essential as all rubbish must be removed on departure.
- Firewood and kindling may not be collected in the park.
- Gas cookers are recommended due to evening winds.
- Extra spare wheel, tools, spares, enough food and extra water containers are essential.
- Make sure that you always have a good supply of water. Fresh water is available at Sendelingsdrif.
- Do not sleep on the bare ground as the park is ideal scorpion habitat.
- Driving off indicated routes and outside camping sites is a serious offence. It is harmful to the park and dangerous to the visitor.
- Scarves protect against dust and wet towels from extreme heat. Provide clothing for extreme temperatures.
- No pets, generators or outboard motors permitted.
- No quad bikes or motorbikes will be allowed inside the Park.
- Picking of plants, removal of seeds, rocks, crystals or driftwood is an offence. Please help us to preserve the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld's wilderness atmosphere.

Contact Information

For enquiries e-mail |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park or phone us on the following numbers:

- Park Tel: +27 (0)27 831 1506 (Reception) Fax: +27 (0)27 831 1175
email: louisa.links@sanparks.org or carmen.carstens@sanparks.org
- Park Manager
email: nick.degoede@sanparks.org
Cell: 072 621 1514
- Duty Manager
email: hendrik.prins@sanparks.org
Cell: 084 742 9797

Birding

Find more birding information and [park bird checklist](#). You can also look at [information for birders](#).

Mammals

Species Checklist

Order Insectivora

Family Soricidae

Crocidura cyanea

Reddish-grey musk shrew

Family Macroscelididae

Elephantulus rupestris

Smith's rock elephant-shrew

Macroscelides proboscideus

Round-eared elephant shrew

Order Chiroptera

Family Molossidae

Sauromys petrophilus

Flat-headed free-tailed bat

Tadarida aegyptiaca

Egyptian free-tailed bat

Family Vespertilionidae

Eptesicus capensis

Cape serotine bat

Myotis seabrai

Angola hairy bat (indeterminate)

Family Nycteridae

Nycteris thebaica

Egyptian slit-faced bat

Family Rhinolophidae

Rhinolophus capensis

Cape horseshoe bat

Rhinolophus clivus

Geophroy's horseshoe bat

Rhinolophus darlingi

Darling's horseshoe bat

Rhinolophus fumigatus

Ruppell's horseshoe bat

Family Hipposideridae

Hipposideros caffer

Sundevall's leaf nosed bat

Order Primates

Family Cercopithecidae

Cercopithecus pygerythrus

Vervet monkey

Papio ursinus

Chacma baboon

Order Lagomorpha

Family Leporidae

Lepus capensis

Cape hare

Pronolagus rupestris

Smith's red rock hare

Order Rodentia

Family Bathyergidae

Cryptomys hottentotus

Common mole rat

Family Hystricidae

Hystrix africaeaustralis

Porcupine

Family Gliridae

Graphiurus platyops

Rock dormouse

Family Sciuridae

Xerus inaurus

Ground squirrel

Family Petromuridae

Petromus typicus

Dassie rat

Family Cricetidae

Desmodillus auricularis

Short-tailed gerbil

Gerbillurus paeba

Hairy-footed gerbil

Malcothrix typica

Large-eared mouse

Otomys unisulcatus

Bush karoo rat

Parotomys brantsii

Brant's whistling rat

Parotomys littledalei

Littledale's whistling rat

Petromyscus collinus

Pygmy rock mouse (indeterminate)

Family Muridae

Aethomys namaquensis
Rhabdomys pumilio
Thallomys paedulus

Namaqua rock mouse
Striped mouse
Black-tailed tree rat

Order Carnivora

Family Hyaenidae

Hyaena brunnea
Proteles cristatus

Brown hyaena (rare)
Aardwolf (rare)

Family felidae

Felis caracal
Felis lybica
Panthera pardus

Caracal
African wild cat (vulnerable)
Leopard (rare)

Family Canidae

Canis mesomelas
Otocyon megalotis
Vulpes chama

Black-backed jackal
Bat-eared fox
Silver fox

Family Mustelidae

Aonyx capensis
Ictonyx striatus
Mellivora capensis

Cape clawless otter
Striped polecat
Honey badger (vulnerable)

Family Viverridae

Atilax paludinosus
Cynictis penicillata
Galerella pulverulenta
Genetta genetta
Suricata suricatta

Water mongoose
Yellow mongoose
Small grey mongoose
Small-spotted genet
Suricate

Order Hyracoidea

Family Procaviidae

Procavia capensis

Rock hyrax

Order Perissodactyla

Family Equidae

Equus zebra hartmannae

Zebra hartmann's

Order Artiodactyla

Family Bovidae

Oreotragus oreotragus
Pelea capreolus
Raphicerus campestris
Sylvicapra grimmia

Klipspringer
Rhebok grey
Steenbok
Duiker grey

Vegetation

The |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld National Park is a very good example of one of the most interesting mega-ecosystems of the world, the succulent Karoo.

There is no desert flora on our planet, possessing similar species richness and individuality of flora. On a surface area of one square kilometre more than 360 plant species of flowering plants (angiosperms) are found at a site with an average rainfall of only 68 mm per year.

The |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld includes two floristic kingdoms. A magnificent variety of dwarf shrubs with water-storing leaves, belongs to the succulent Karoo region of the Greater Cape Flora, while its western portion forms part of the East Gariep Centre, the most important centre of the Nama Karoo Region. The |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld is divided into two portions belonging to two major climatical systems, the temperate winter rainfall region with its high air

humidity, and the inland region with higher temperatures and important summer rains and low humidity, respectively. Both units are closely placed against each other, separated by a narrow transition zone of about 10 to 20 km.

One outstanding example of such unique life forms is the psammophorous plants, i.e. plant species that are fixing a layer of sand to their surface in order to build a protective shelter against the force of sand storms and the related sand blasting.

The |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld is widely reckoned as one of the world's richest succulent areas. It is estimated that 50 genera out of a total of 160 from the Mesembryanthemaceae family occur here.

A number of endemic plant species only occur in small colonies on the highest peaks. About 30% of the total floristic composition is endemic to the park.

There are four main landscape units: the Orange River and adjacent floodplains; gentle undulating plains (distributed in the summer/all year round rainfall area); rolling hills; and rugged mountains.

Two trees are particularly associated with the |Ai-|Ais/Richtersveld: the bastard quiver tree (Kiewiet April 2001) and the half-mens (half-human), *Pachypodium namaquanum*. The half-mens is a succulent with an unbranched, cylindrical stem, 1.5 to 2.5 m, and sometimes up to 4 m, in height. Near the top, it has a tuft of branches, which lean northwards at an angle of 20 – 30 degrees. The Namas revere the human-like trees as the embodiment of their ancestors, half human, half plant, mourning for their ancient Namibian home.

People with disabilities

Wheelchair Access

There are accessible accommodation units at the park's two wilderness camps: Tatasberg and Ganakouriep. Both these units have roll-in showers. There is currently no accessible accommodation at the main camp at Sendelingsdrif, but this omission will hopefully be corrected soon.

(Please see additional information on [Wheelchair Accessibility](#))