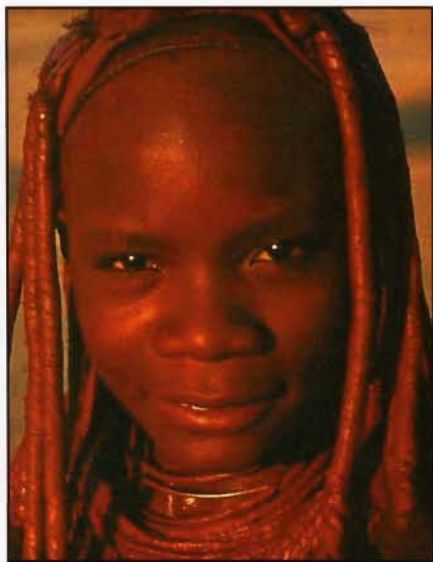


THE PEOPLE OF NAMIBIA

While the desert lands of the Namib are too inhospitable to support human life, the balance of Namibia is home to a warm and wonderful collection of people.



In a land that is mostly sparse and arid, the people of Namibia are like a refreshing oasis. Despite many centuries of colonial rule and the trials of life lived in a place where only one percent of the land is arable, Namibians are some of the friendliest and most welcoming people in Africa.

The 1,674,000 inhabitants of Namibia comprise a rich tapestry of peoples from all parts of Africa as well as from Europe and other parts of the world. Today, one-quarter of the population lives in urban areas, while the rest lead a rural life, doing their best to make the land yield its hidden bounty.

A COMMUNITY OF NOMADS

One of the most interesting groups that call Namibia their home is the Himba people. This native tribe lives in the northwest region of Namibia and has a proud history of thriving where it is difficult to do so.

During Himba rituals, a holy fire is kindled using two sacred sticks that must only be cut and handled by the clan chief. The fire represents a connection to the spiritual world and the link between the living and their ancestors. The fire must never go out, or it is taken as a sign of bad things to come.

As recently as the early part of the 20th century, the Himba were nomadic tribes, living off the cattle, goats and sheep that roamed Namibia's central upland region. However, fierce battles with colonial forces sharply reduced their numbers, the tribes were displaced, and today they live in extended family groups that practice subsistence farming.



NAMIBIA: AN OVERVIEW

For most of its 1,200 miles, the mighty desert occupies what has come to be the western coast of the gentle country of Namibia.



plunging 1,800 feet into the earth. And to the north, your eyes will fall upon rich, verdant farmland sprouting up around a generous series of rivers.

Stand on the west coast of Namibia, at the edge of the Namib desert. To the west, rolling surf and Atlantic blue as far as the eye can see. To the east, mile after mile of apricot-colored dunes that seem to undulate forever. From this vantage point, it would seem that this is all Namibia is comprised of.

But let your eye wander farther to the east and watch as rolling dunes and open plains suddenly give way to the formidable Central Escarpment – a massive mountain range rising 6,500 feet above sea level. Look to the south and you will have to catch your breath as you gaze down into the Fish River Canyon,



A STORY OF PERSEVERANCE

This is the true Namibia, an ancient land of contrasts, first inhabited by the San nomads over two thousand years ago. It is a land that had not been ruled by its own people for hundreds of years. But it has endured the injustices of foreign rule and South African apartheid just as it has endured the relentless African sun year after year ... and in 1989, Namibia emerged as a free and glorious nation that now welcomes its global neighbors with open arms.

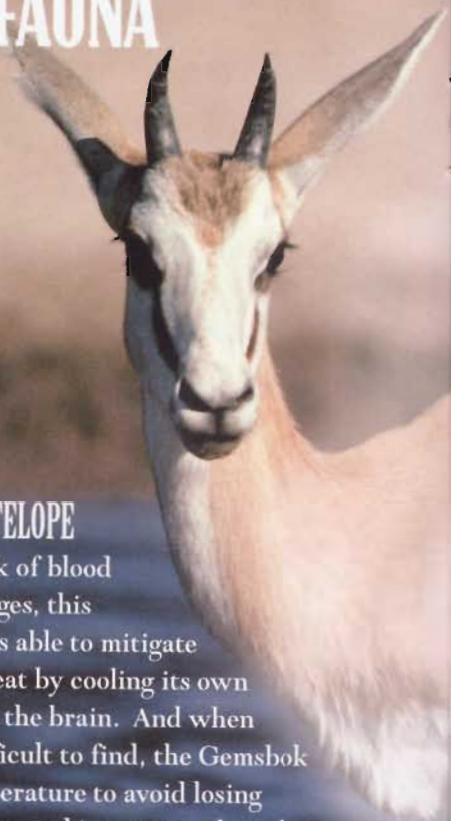


FABULOUS FAUNA

While it may seem a barren wasteland at first glance, the Namib is actually home to a startling variety of animal life.

AN AMAZING ANTELOPE

With a unique network of blood vessels and nasal passages, this extraordinary animal is able to mitigate the scorching desert heat by cooling its own blood before it reaches the brain. And when water becomes too difficult to find, the Gemsbok can raise its body temperature to avoid losing water through sweating, and increase its breathing rate from 20 to 120 pants per minute. When the sun sets, they breathe more slowly to maintain their body temperature through the chilly night.



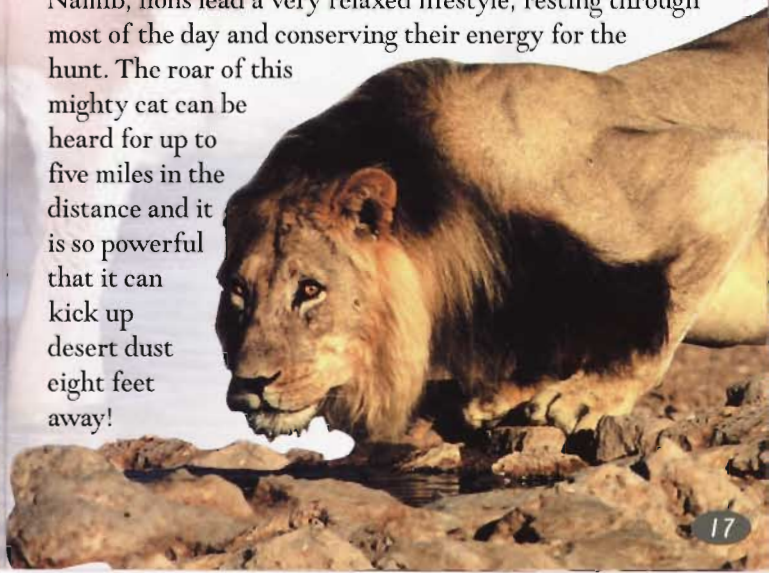
THE CRAFTY JACKAL

For most desert animals, the daily search for food is a trying task. But for the jackal, sustenance can be found almost anywhere. In the heart of the desert jackals will eat insects, birds, golden moles or the carcasses of larger animals. Along the coast, this sly creature makes a meal of weak

fur seal pups. In a place where food is scarce, the jackal's diverse appetite is one of its greatest assets.

THE MIGHTY CAT

While not a common sight in the Namib, lions will occasionally wander into the desert from the east in search of food. To help them deal with the demanding heat of the Namib, lions lead a very relaxed lifestyle, resting through most of the day and conserving their energy for the hunt. The roar of this mighty cat can be heard for up to five miles in the distance and it is so powerful that it can kick up desert dust eight feet away!



A CURRENT OF COLD

Even though the Namib is one of the most arid places on earth, it is most heavily influenced by the vast and icy ocean lapping at its shores.

It is over two million years old. A driving force beneath the surface of the southern Atlantic Ocean. It has been responsible for the ruin of many a ship and crew, yet it is a powerful life-bringing source for millions of creatures. It is the mighty Benguela Current.

ACTIVE EARTH

Although the world we all inhabit seems stable and solid, it is actually a continuously moving, growing, and changing globe of activity. About two million years

ago, the straight that connected North and South America closed and the Antarctic ice cap was formed. These two events enclosed the Atlantic Ocean and made it possible for currents to circulate toward the equator. This is how the Benguela was born.

AN UPWELLING OF LIFE

As the Benguela flows, it causes a phenomenon known as an upwelling which brings water from the depths of the Atlantic closer to the surface. This water is filled with rich nutrients, caused by the decomposition of plant and animal life on the ocean floor. As the nutrient-rich water flows upward, it helps sustain phytoplankton (miniscule plant life), which in turn feeds zooplankton (microscopic animal life), and leads to an abundant ecosystem like few others on earth.

WINDS OF CHANGE

The waters off the Namib's coast are cooled not only by the Benguela Current, but by the strong winds that blow almost all year long. This force blows the warmer water near the Atlantic's surface northward, causing the icy water underneath to rise to the surface. These ocean-driving winds are considered anticyclonic because they blow in a counter-clockwise direction.



As a result of the marriage between wind and water, the ocean temperature off the coast of the Namib can be as much as 41 degrees colder than other parts of the South Atlantic at similar latitudes.