

Namibia

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Location and area

Namibia is a republic in south-western Africa, bordered on the north by Angola and Zambia, on the east by Botswana and South Africa, on the south by South Africa, and on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The total land area is 824,269 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

The land area of Namibia falls into three physiographical regions:

1. a low-lying coastal belt, consisting of the Namib Desert that extends along the entire Atlantic coast and ranges from 100 to 160 km in width
2. the central plateau that rises abruptly at the Great Escarpment. The plateau averages about 1,100 m above sea level, but rises in several mountainous areas to elevations greater than 1,800 m
3. the Kalahari desert, a highland area along the eastern border, containing vast sandy tracts, which extends into neighbouring Botswana.

The only permanent rivers are the Orange, Cunene, Cubanga (Okavango), and Zambezi, all of which form Namibia's borders. The territory has virtually no other surface water. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate is generally hot and dry. The average annual rainfall in the Namib Desert along the coast is 50 mm. Inland, annual rainfall increases from 150 mm in the south to 560 mm in the north. Most rain falls in summer (October to March). The average annual temperature on the coast is 17° C; inland it is 21° C. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Land use

Vegetation is scanty in both the Namib and Kalahari deserts. Woodland savannah covers the central plateau. True forests are found only in the northeast. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

Some possible peatland areas are indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Possible peatland areas (in km²) in Namibia and adjacent Botswana (after Howard-Williams & Thompson 1985).

Chobe-Linyanti	Botswana, Namibia	Swamp	200
Lake Liambesi	Namibia	Shallow lake	50

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 98 km² of histosols exist in Namibia and 7,748 km² of gley soils.

Still to be checked:

Scott, L., Cooremans, B., de Wet, J.S., Vogel, J.C. 1991. Holocene environmental changes in Namibia inferred from pollen analysis of swamp and lake deposits. *The Holocene* 1: 8-13.