



Meerkats on sentry duty in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park



Tawny eagle in camelthorn tree

KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

In the north of the Cape, sandwiched between Namibia and Botswana, is a magical corner of wilderness. Here, Botswana and South Africa have joined forces to protect the wildlife on opposite sides of their border, forming the world's first transfrontier park: the Kgalagadi. This consists of about 38,000km² of the Kalahari which was previously divided between South Africa's Kalahari Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park.

Being away from most major routes, the park gets few visitors, making it ideal for dedicated game-viewers. Springbok, blue wildebeest, gemsbok, red hartebeest and eland abound, while meerkats, leopards, and black-maned lions add to the entertainment. This is also one of Africa's best parks for cheetah, which thrive by hunting in its fossil river valleys and the surrounding Kalahari dunes.

If you take your game-viewing fairly seriously, then the Kgalagadi is a real gem; it's well worth spending at least three or four nights here. However, don't try to just drop in for a couple of nights, as you need to spend time in the Kgalagadi to get the best out of the park.

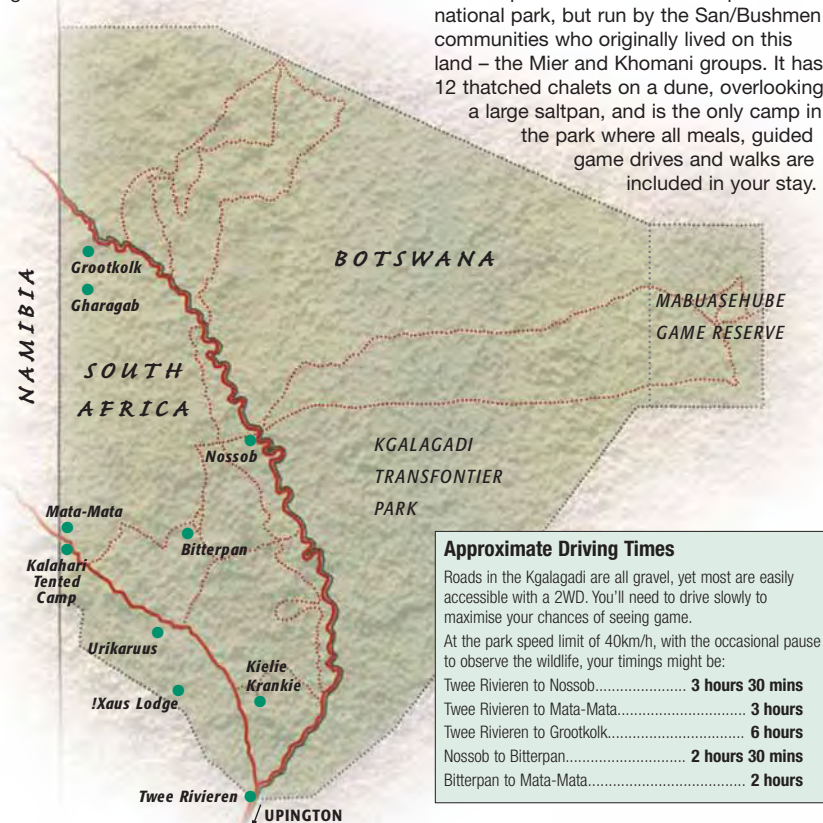
Access is easiest by flying from Cape Town or Johannesburg to Upington, where we can arrange for you to collect a hire car. Alternatively you can visit as part of a fly-drive trip between Cape Town and Windhoek. Now that the border post between Namibia and South Africa at Mata Mata is open, it's also possible to drive a great circular route beginning in Windhoek, and including Sossusvlei, the Fish River Canyon and the Kgalagadi.

Originally, the SA National Parks Board ran only three 'restcamps' in this park. These were designed for self-driving visitors, with simple self-catering accommodation dotted around village-like compounds, which include a shop, a small fuel station, a pool and sometimes even a restaurant.

Of these restcamps, **Twee Rivieren** is the largest and most developed. It's near the

park's southern entrance and has the only restaurant. **Nossob** and **Mata Mata** are both further north and more basic (cook for yourself, equipment provided), but they do have hides to watch adjacent waterholes.

More recently, six 'wilderness camps' have been built in scenic locations deep in the park. Small, remote and unfenced, these are very different in character to the restcamps; they feel more isolated and closer to the wildlife. Most take eight people when full. All require you to bring your own water, fuel and food – though cooking utensils, crockery and cutlery are provided – and all the accommodation is en suite. For safety, each has a single armed game scout in residence.



Grootkolk Wilderness Camp has four simple tents overlooking a floodlit waterhole in the dunes, and is a favourite. **Urikaruus Wilderness Camp** is also good, with four cabins built on stilts overlooking the dry river bed of the Auob. **Kielie Krankie Wilderness Camp** has four cabins built on top of dunes, with a waterhole below.

Two of these wilderness camps are accessible only by 4WD: **Bitterpan Wilderness Camp**, which has four tents overlooking a large pan, and **Gharagab Wilderness Camp**, with its four log cabins in the park's far north.

By contrast, the larger **Kalahari Tented Camp** has 15 large, comfortable en-suite tents and even a swimming pool!

Totally different again, **!Xaus Lodge** is within a private reserve which is part of the national park, but run by the San/Bushman communities who originally lived on this land – the Mier and Khomani groups. It has 12 thatched chalets on a dune, overlooking a large saltpan, and is the only camp in the park where all meals, guided game drives and walks are included in your stay.

Approximate Driving Times	
Roads in the Kgalagadi are all gravel, yet most are easily accessible with a 2WD. You'll need to drive slowly to maximise your chances of seeing game.	
At the park speed limit of 40km/h, with the occasional pause to observe the wildlife, your timings might be:	
Twee Rivieren to Nossob.....	3 hours 30 mins
Twee Rivieren to Mata-Mata.....	3 hours
Twee Rivieren to Grootkolk.....	6 hours
Nossob to Bitterpan.....	2 hours 30 mins
Bitterpan to Mata-Mata.....	2 hours