

KULALA WILDERNESS RESERVE WILDLIFE & ECOLOGY

Kulala Wilderness Reserve, a 40 000ha (98 839-acre) tract of arid Namib Desert near the spectacular sights of Sossusvlei, borders the expansive Namib Naukluft Park. The dramatic Sossusvlei dunes are surrounded by rugged, ancient volcanic mountains and open plains dotted with the odd quiver tree..

CAMPS

- Little Kulala
- Kulala Desert Lodge



Sossusvlei translates into 'the gathering place of water' in the local Nama language, and, odd as it may seem, in good years seasonal rains in the foothills of the Naukluft and Tsaris Mountains succeed in reaching the vleis. This creates temporary lakes that mirror the sand dunes surrounding them, a miraculous transformation. The vleis have evocative names such as Hidden Vlei and Dead Vlei, while the dunes rise up to 300 metres (984 feet) above the valley floor with razor-sharp edges that stand out against the blue sky.

Sossusvlei is situated within the Namib Desert, the oldest desert in the world, which itself is part of the Namib Naukluft National Park that stretches 400 km (250 miles) south of Walvis Bay and is sandwiched between the west coast and the escarpment that runs parallel more than 100 km (62 miles) inland. Its huge red dunes and flat valley floors make up the archetypical view for which the Namib is world famous. The dunes are also evocatively known as the Sand Sea. Those nearest the coast are most mobile and no vegetation grows on them, as they are constantly evolving. Rainfall at the coast can average dramatically less than 50 mm a year, and even further inland it measures a paltry 50-100mm annually.

In the Kulala Wilderness Reserve, guests can witness the wonders of the sparsely distributed desert-adapted wildlife such as ostrich, springbok and gemsbok as they eke out an existence. Larger predators include the occasional brown hyaena, a mystical shaggy-coated scavenger. Smaller creatures such as bat-eared fox, black-backed jackal, porcupine and Cape fox can be seen at night in the cool desert air. Anchieta's dune lizard with its peculiar thermoregulatory dance and tenebrionid beetles have all adapted to life here. Nocturnal explorations can reveal dancing white lady spiders and perhaps Grant's golden mole, a Namib Desert endemic.



The sands offer refuge to reptiles like shovel-snouted lizard and web-footed gecko. One bird, the aptly named dune lark, has its entire global distribution limited to the area, so dependent is it on the area's characteristic sands. Other unique birds include Burchell's courser, Ludwig's bustard and Stark's lark.

Despite the lack of vegetation and low rainfall, a surprisingly diverse array of insects, reptiles and rodents make their home on the Reserve, surviving thanks in part to the coastal fog that creeps up off the sea each dawn and penetrates up to 50 km (30 miles) inland. At dusk the call of common barking geckoes resound through the clear air, and walks reveal the smaller creatures – the buck-spool spider with its multi-entrance burrow or the ambush specialist ant-lion, to name but a few.