

MARIENFLUSS CONSERVANCY WILDLIFE & ECOLOGY

In the country's far north, the Kunene River – the only permanent source of water in the region and the border between Namibia and Angola – is lined with a narrow belt of riverine vegetation and palm trees. Perpendicular to this northern border lie the enormous Hartmann's and Marienfluss Valleys, which comprise part of the vast 303 400-hectare (749 641-acre) Marienfluss Conservancy.

CAMPS

- Serra Cafema



These valleys run for miles between the Hartmann and Otjihipa Mountains, largely folded, dark metamorphic rock which, when exposed over time to the sun, wind and temperature extremes, cracks and rusts into reddish-brown gravel plains. In rainy years, the enormous Marienfluss and Hartmann's valleys become grassy expanses, but generally their flat topographies are covered by sand broken only by a few tough grasses, toxic euphorbias, mysterious 'fairy circles' and sheer granite inselbergs.

The principal, albeit minimal, source of water comes from the famous Namibian early morning mists, generated when the icy water of the Atlantic Ocean meets the hot desert air of the Skeleton Coast. This daily cycle of airborne moisture rolls inland along the various depressions and canyons formed by ancient rivers. As the dew settles, it is eagerly harvested by plants, animals and insects before the sun burns it off.

Wildlife such as gemsbok (oryx), springbok, brown hyaena, Hartmann's mountain zebra and Cape fox occur sporadically, while smaller creatures abound in this surreal setting. The Kunene River also harbours a population of Nile crocodile and vibrant birdlife. Desert plated lizard, Kunene racer, Namaqua chameleon and horned adder are some of the reptiles to be seen here.

Burchell's courser, bokmakierie, pririt batis, Stark's lark, Rüppell's korhaan and Benguela long-billed lark are among the characteristic bird species to be found in this area.