

TORRA CONSERVANCY WILDLIFE & ECOLOGY

The 352 200ha (870 274-acre) Torra Conservancy protects classic Damaraland topography – red-rock hills interspersed with valleys and dry riverbeds. Situated a short distance inland from the stark Skeleton Coast and just north of the true Namib Desert, Damaraland Camp in the Torra Conservancy exists within one of the driest, most desolate regions in Africa. In this arid environment the ceaseless processes of life revolve around harnessing near non-existent water in the most economical way possible. Desert adaptation is the miracle of the surprisingly rich diversity of fauna and flora surviving here.

CAMPS

- Damaraland Camp



The principal source of water in the Torra Conservancy comes from the famous Namibian early morning mists that are generated by the icy waters of the Atlantic Ocean colliding with 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 Namibian sun burns it off.

Damaraland Camp is located on the north face of the Haub River Valley around 90 km (55 miles) from Torra Bay. The river flows occasionally during the short rainy season, seldom breaking through the dunes to the ocean, but is nevertheless a critical secondary cycle of water in the region, vital in maintaining groundwater – liquid resources that hide beneath the sandy riverbeds and so sustain riverine vegetation through the long dry seasons. Even large trees such as mopane, camel thorn and the impressive ana tree can survive along the river courses in this way, their browse providing sustenance to a variety of species.

Indeed, this seemingly barren landscape supports a varied and breathtaking assortment of desert-adapted species including healthy populations of rare desert elephant, occasional cheetah and black rhino. Good populations of gemsbok (oryx), kudu, Hartmann's mountain zebra, southern giraffe and springbok occur with lion and brown hyaena also sighted at times..



Birding is excellent with over 240 species recorded in the Torra Conservancy. Raptors include martial eagle, lappet-faced vulture and pale chanting goshawk. The endemic Benguela long-billed lark is common on the rocky slopes here, its plaintive whistling call an evocative sound. Common camp visitors include pale-winged starling, mountain wheatear, Rüppell's korhaan and Cape bunting. Guests could even startle foraging Namaqua sandgrouse between the tents. Along the dry Huab River with its large camelthorn trees, common scimitarbill, acacia pied barbet, Rüppell's parrot and perhaps a roosting spotted eagle-owl can be found. Ephemeral pools in the Huab sometimes harbour black crane, South African shelduck, hamerkop and three-banded plover. Hoesch's skink is a unique reptile find in this area