

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is a large wildlife preserve and conservation area in southern Africa.

The park straddles the border between South Africa and Botswana and comprises two adjoining national parks:

Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa

Gemsbok National Park in Botswana

The total area of the park is 38,000 square kilometres (15,000 sq mi). Approximately three-quarters of the park lies in Botswana and one-quarter in South Africa. Kgalagadi means "place of thirst." [1] In December 2015, media reports claimed that rights for gas-fracking in more than half of the Botswana portion of the park had been sold.[2] The Botswana government later refuted these reports. [3]

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Location and terrain[edit]

The park is located largely within the southern Kalahari Desert. The terrain consists of red sand dunes, sparse vegetation, occasional trees, and the dry riverbeds of the Nossob and Auob Rivers. The rivers are said to flow only about once per century. However, water flows underground and provides life for grass and camelthorn trees growing in the river beds.

The rivers may flow briefly after large thunderstorms.[4]

Wildlife[edit]

The park has abundant, varied wildlife. It is home to large mammalian predators such as lions, cheetahs, African leopards, and hyenas. Migratory herds of large herbivores such as blue wildebeest, springbok, eland, and red hartebeest also live and move seasonally within the park, providing sustenance for the predators. More than 200 species of bird can be found in the park, including vultures and raptors such as eagles, buzzards, and secretary birds.[5]

Since 2005, the protected area is considered a Lion Conservation Unit and a lion stronghold in Southern Africa.[6]

Weather[edit]

The weather in the Kalahari can reach extremes. January is midsummer in southern Africa and the daytime temperatures are often in excess of 40 °C (104 °F). Winter nights can be quite cold with temperatures below freezing. Extreme temperatures of −11 °C (12 °F) and

up to 45 °C (113 °F) have been recorded. Precipitation is sparse in this desert area.[7]

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Climate data for Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (Twee Rivieren)

Month Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Year

Record high °C (°F) 42.0

(107.6) 41.2

(106.2) 40.5

(104.9) 37.2

(99.0) 33.5

(92.3) 29.3

(84.7) 30.2

(86.4) 33.6

(92.5) 38.5

(101.3) 40.5

(104.9) 41.7

(107.1) 45.4

(113.7) 45.4

(113.7)

Average high °C (°F) 35.8

(96.4) 34.5

(94.1) 32.5

(90.5) 28.7

(83.7) 24.6

(76.3) 21.6

(70.9) 22.0

(71.6) 23.9

(75.0) 28.6

(83.5) 31.0

(87.8) 33.6

(92.5) 35.6

(96.1) 29.4

(84.9)

Daily mean °C (°F) 27.7

(81.9) 26.7

(80.1) 24.6

(76.3) 20.2

(68.4) 15.1

(59.2) 11.8

(53.2) 11.4

(52.5) 13.3

(55.9) 18.0

(64.4) 21.4

(70.5) 24.4

(75.9) 26.7

(80.1) 20.1

(68.2)

Average low °C (°F) 19.6

(67.3) 19.1

(66.4) 16.8

(62.2) 11.7

(53.1) 5.5

(41.9) 2.1

(35.8) 0.9

(33.6) 2.7

(36.9) 7.5

(45.5) 11.8

(53.2) 15.3

(59.5) 17.8

(64.0) 10.9

(51.6)

Record low °C (°F) 7.6

(45.7) 5.7

(42.3) 3.9

(39.0) -2.0

(28.4) -7.3

(18.9) -9.7

(14.5) -10.3

(13.5) -9.7

(14.5) -5.0

(23.0) -0.2

(31.6) 3.2

(37.8) 3.0

(37.4) -10.3

(13.5)

Average precipitation mm (inches) 43

(1.7) 45

(1.8) 33

(1.3) 31

(1.2) 12

(0.5) 3

(0.1) 1

(0.0) 2

(0.1) 2

(0.1) 12

(0.5) 18

(0.7) 20

(0.8) 222

(8.7)

Average precipitation days (≥ 0.1 mm) 5 5 5 4 3 2 1 1 1 2 3 4 38

Average relative humidity (%) 38 47 55 59 61 62 57 51 39 36 35 34 48

Source: Deutscher Wetterdienst[8]

Facilities[edit]

Within the park there are three traditional tourist lodges, called "rest camps". These are fully serviced lodges and include amenities such as air conditioning, shops and swimming pools. There are also six wilderness camps in the park. The wilderness camps provide little more than shelter and wash water; visitors must supply their own food, drinking water and firewood.[9]

Visitors[edit]

During the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the park received a total of 52,463 visitors up from 48,221 in the previous year.[10]

History[edit]

The Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa was established on 31 July 1931 mainly to protect the migrating game, especially the gemsbok, from poaching. In 1948 an informal verbal agreement was made between the then Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Union of South Africa to set up a conservation area in the contiguous areas of the two lands. In June 1992 representatives from the South African National Parks Board (now SANParks) and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks of Botswana set up a joint management committee to manage the area as a single ecological unit. A management plan was drafted, reviewed, and approved in 1997. The parties agreed to cooperate in tourism and share equally in park entrance fees. On 7 April 1999, Botswana and South Africa signed a historic bilateral agreement whereby both countries undertook to manage their adjacent national parks, the Gemsbok National Park in Botswana and the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park in South Africa as a single ecological unit. The boundary between the two parks had no physical barriers, although it is also the international border between the two countries. This allowed for the free movement of animals. On 12 May 2000, President Festus Mogae of Botswana and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa formally launched Southern Africa's first peace park, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.[11]

Cultural preservation and establishment of !Xaus Lodge[edit]

In October 2002, the governments set aside 580 km² (224 mi²) for the use of the native peoples, the Khomani San and Mier communities. This was divided between 277.69 km² of San Heritage Land and 301.34 km² of Mier Heritage Land. The South African National Parks (SANParks) manages the land under contract. This land was named the !Ae!Hai Heritage Park.[12] The settlement agreement also provided for the communities to receive funds for the specific purpose of constructing a tourism facility.[13] The lodge was named !Xaus Lodge (meaning 'heart' in the local language) and is managed commercially on behalf of the ‡Khomani San and Mier communities by Transfrontier Parks Destinations.[14] !Xaus Lodge's existence allows the cultural practices of the ‡Khomani San to continue in a few ways. The cultural village near the Lodge allows the local people to create and sell their crafts.[15] This is both a way for them to emulate and remember the culture of historical

‡Khomani San, and a way for them to express the changes in that culture. The !Ae!Hai Heritage park has also been named the first International Dark Sky Sanctuary in Africa by the International Dark Sky Association.[16]

Fracking[edit]

In December 2015, it was reported in the media that the government of Botswana quietly sold the rights to frack for shale gas in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Reports said it granted prospecting licences for 29,291 square kilometres (2,929,100 ha), 34,435 square kilometres (3,443,500 ha) and 23,980 square kilometres (2,398,000 ha) – more than half of the Botswanan part of the park – to a United Kingdom-listed company called "Nodding Donkey". The sale was not reported at the time. In November 2015, the company changed its name to "Karoo Energy".[17] In February 2016 Botswana's Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism refuted these reports saying "There are also no licenses for fracking in the KTP" and "no intention to issue any approvals for fracking in the KTP or any other national park or national game reserve anywhere in Botswana".[18]

Gallery[edit]

Red dunes in the Kgalagadi-Kalahari

The gemsbok or oryx, for which the original parks were named, standing in a dry riverbed

Social bird nests

Urikaruus Camp

A Southern African cheetah with a carcass

A male lion at a waterhole

Meerkats are abundant

Herd of springboks

See also[edit]

Gemsbok

Kalahari Desert

External links[edit]

Wikivoyage has a travel guide for Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

South African National Parks website

Map of the park

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism website

Photography and Safari guide to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

!Xaus Lodge - owned and run by the Khomani San and Mier communities

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