



## Fish River Canyon in Namibia

Fish River Canyon is the second largest canyon in the world after the Grand Canyon in the United States and is part of the Ais-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park jointly managed by Namibia and South Africa.

The canyon is a spectacular natural phenomenon, stretching nearly 160 kilometers across the vast Namibian landscape, 27 km wide and up to 550 meters deep.

It has been eroded over the centuries by the Fish River which with a length of over 650 kilometers is the longest river in Namibia, the Fish River originates from the eastern Naukuft mountains, flowing through the rugged Koubis massif, before flowing into southwest of Ai-Ais, in the Orange River on the border with South Africa.

The southern area of the Canyon is protected as Ais-Ais and Richtersveld Transfrontier National Park born from the union of Richtersveld National Park, in South Africa, with Ai-Ais Hot Springs Game Park in Namibia; the two regions are divided by the Orange River, famous for the extraction of diamonds along its banks.

Richtersveld's cultural and botanical landscape is renowned as a biodiversity hotspot with some of the richest succulent plants in the world and has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

The Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park is part of the [Succulent Karoo Biome](#); many plant species, especially succulents, are found here and nowhere else on earth, specifically adapted to the arid climate.

The famous but extremely rare Halfmens, which literally means half a man, is an endemic succulent up to 5 meters tall, of the aloe family, which owes its name to the fact that it looks like a human being from afar.

Also typical of the great region is the quiver tree, a tree with a soft bark of the aloe family that can grow for centuries; its name derives from the fact that the San people used its hollowed trunk as a quiver for arrows.

The vegetation of the park lives thanks to the early morning Atlantic morning fog envelops the Richtersveld desert mountain range, called Malmokkies by the local population which guarantees the necessary humidity and water.

In the Park traces of ancient human activities have been found, stone tools and cave paintings dating back to 4,000 years ago when these places were the territory of the San Bushmen and later of the Khoikhoi have been found.



## Fish River Canyon in Namibia

Today the descendants of these ancient populations are actively involved in the protection of the Ai-Ais - Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, which helps to keep awareness of their culture alive.

Despite receiving less than 50 mm of rain per year, it is also home to a variety of mammals that have adapted to this harsh climate. These include: the black-backed jackal, leopard, Hartmann's zebra, duiker, klipspringer, and rock hyrax (dassies) which are a favorite prey of Verreaux's eagle that can be seen hovering against the backdrop of the vast African blue sky. There are many other birds, including birds of prey that make this barren wilderness their home.

Fish River Canyon is the most visited place in the park, approaching the canyon from the open plateau to the north, the canyon opens up in a spectacular and unexpected way, presenting breathtaking views of rocky gorges and lunar landscapes, giving a deep sense of vastness and peace in an uncontaminated place, free from human development.

