



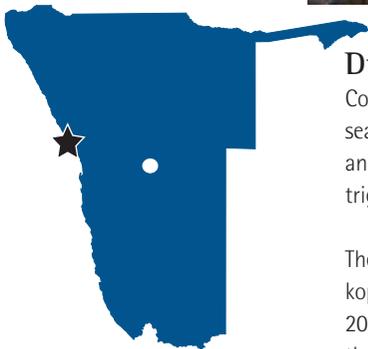
# Cape Cross Seal Reserve

“More seals breed at Cape Cross than anywhere else in the world. It’s an important, interesting place. You should come visit.”

*Job Kamati • Ranger, Cape Cross Sea Reserve,  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism*



Republic of Namibia  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism



## Discover the Cape Cross Seal Reserve

Come and view the world's largest breeding colony of Cape fur seals. Take an interpretative walk along the edge of the colony and learn more about these captivating creatures and the intriguing history of Cape Cross.

The Cape Cross Seal Reserve lies close to the coastal towns of Swakopmund and Henties Bay within the West Coast National Park, a 200-km stretch of coastline between the Swakop and Ugab rivers that is renowned for its excellent angling and geological wonders. The coastline and plains are home to a rich variety of life, making it the perfect spot for botanists and birders to explore.

The Brandberg Mountain, Namibia's highest point, is visible from Cape Cross, and just 100 kilometres away is Twyfelfontein, Namibia's first UNESCO World Heritage site and an area rich in ancient rock engravings.

## Remnants of history

In 1486, celebrated Portuguese explorer, Diego Cão, erected a *padrão*, a stone cross, establishing Portugal's claim to the territory on this barren coast. Over the next 400 years many ships wrecked on these shores. In 1884 the first sighting of Cape fur seals off the coast of Southern Africa was recorded. However, it was only when guano, the waste left by fish-eating birds that is used as fertiliser, was discovered in 1895 that people settled at Cape Cross.

Business boomed and tens of millions of tons of guano were exported to Europe. The country's first railway line and water-distilling plant were established, and the post office at Cape Cross became the victim of the country's first postal robbery. Nine years after the boom began, it ended. Slowly, the harsh nature of the coast reclaimed the land. Today the bay where ships once brought their provisions is a salt pan and all that remains of the guano industry are rusty bits of history lying scattered in the sand.



## Tides of life

A dense mat of black carpets the beach at Cape Cross. Then, slowly, the mass comes into focus and thousands of individual seals take shape. Cape Cross Nature Reserve is the largest Cape fur seal colony in the world. During the breeding season in November and December, there may be up to 210 000 seals at Cape Cross.

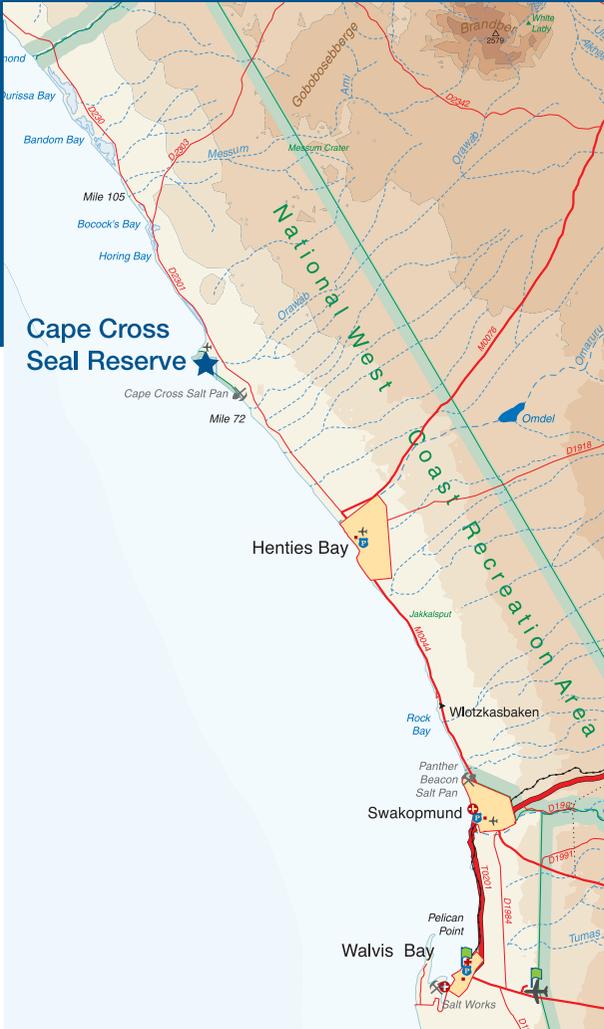
A cacophony of bleats and barks fills the air, as massive bulls fight for the right to dominate territory and mate with females. The females, breeding in synchrony once a year, fish in the nutrient-rich waters of the Benguela Current before returning to shore to find their offspring amidst thousands of young pups. Yet there is more to life at Cape Cross than seals. Kelp gulls skim the surface of the sea, grabbing food as they go, while flocks of cormorants soar in single file above the waves. Killer whales and copper sharks also hunt in these waters. On land black-backed jackals prowl the edges of the seal colonies looking for an oppor-

tunity to scavenge, while under cover of darkness, elusive brown hyaenas haunt the beaches.

## Conservation efforts

The cold Benguela Current sustains a wealth of marine life. It continually produces fog that supports an intriguing variety of animals and plants, including over a hundred species of lichens. Providing stability to the fragile desert environment, vast lichen fields occur at Mile 30 south of Henties Bay and north of the turnoff to Cape Cross Seal Reserve.

Endemic to Namibia, the Damara tern, a small swallow-like bird, breeds in scrapes on the gravel plains near the coast. Although protected, the nesting grounds of the terns and the lichen fields are under continual threat from thoughtless off-road driving. Please do your part for conservation and DO NOT drive off the roads.



## Environmental Care Code

Please adhere to the following:

- Do not feed or throw objects at the animals.
  - Stay on the walkway and keep to existing roads and tracks.
  - Do not litter.
  - Please adhere to the rules and regulations as printed on your park permit.
- Have fun!



### Facilities:

A 200-metre walkway constructed of recycled plastic suitable for wheelchairs, information points, toilet facilities, five campsites with basic ablutions, picnic spot and reception.

Permits are available on site. Please note, there is no petrol and very limited water available at Cape Cross. Along the coast, at Mile 14, Mile 72 and Mile 108, there are campsites operated by Namibia Wildlife Resorts ([www.nwr.com.na](http://www.nwr.com.na)) providing basic amenities.

### Getting there:

Located off the C34, the main coastal road, the Cape Cross Seal Reserve is 430 km from Windhoek, 178 km from Torra Bay, 120 km from Swakopmund and 60 km from Henties Bay.

### Fact file:

Cape Cross Seal Reserve was established to protect the largest breeding colony of Cape fur seals in the world.

The Cape fur seal, *Arctocephalus pusillus pusillus*, is the largest of the world's nine fur-seal species.

Proclamation date: 1968

Size: 60 km<sup>2</sup>

Hours: Open daily from 08:00–17:00 (16 November– 30 June) and 10:00–17:00 (1 July–15 November)

[www.met.gov.na](http://www.met.gov.na)

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