



NAMIBIA

Hospitality & Leisure

OVERVIEW





Overview of the Namibian hospitality and leisure sector

Namibia's hospitality and leisure sector is experiencing a strong post-pandemic recovery, with international arrivals reaching 850,000 in 2023 – an 88% increase from the previous year. South Africa and Angola remain key regional markets, while Germany leads among overseas visitors. Strategic government interventions, including improved infrastructure and a refreshed marketing strategy, have driven this resurgence. However, challenges such as limited peak-season flights and accessibility issues persist.

The Tourism Sector Recovery Plan (2022–2024) has played a crucial role in this post-COVID-19 rebound in the northern and southern regions, although central and coastal areas have struggled with declining occupancy rates. With travellers looking for experience-driven holidays, rest camps remain popular and guest farms and lodges are gaining traction.



Visa reforms and connectivity boost accessibility

Namibia has introduced several visa reforms, including:

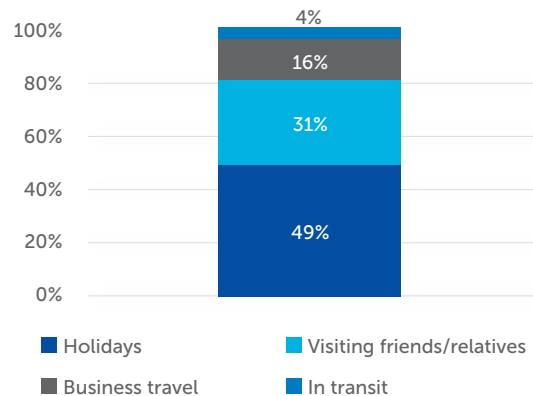
- a visa-on-arrival policy from March 2025, simplifying entry for air travellers;
- an e-visa system from April 2025 to reduce congestion at entry points; and
- a reciprocal visa policy to ensure fair treatment of Namibian travellers abroad.

Sustainable tourism

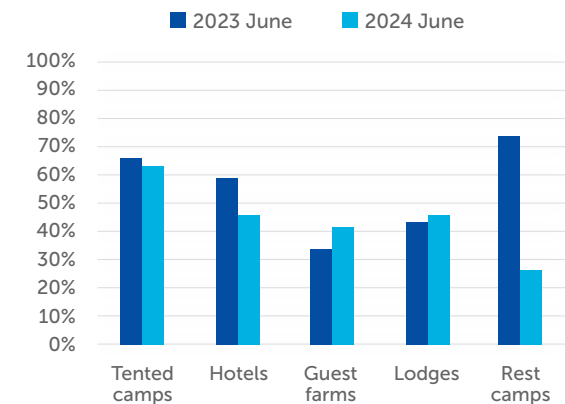
Namibia ran various Sustainable Tourism Roadshows in 2023 and 2024 to promote cultural and heritage tourism. Water conservation and waste management in remote areas have also been driven as key priorities along with inclusive market access and the need for the sector to be visibly more diverse and equitable. In particular the sector discussions of industry dominance by White-owned businesses are ongoing.

International tourists 2023: 863,872

Purpose for visit 2023



Rooms Occupancy by Type of Hospitality Establishment



Visitor numbers have rebounded well over the last two years in coming back to 54% of pre-COVID-19 levels, with nearly half of all visitors entering for a holiday. Preference for accommodation locations have also shifted in the last few years with guest farms and lodges becoming increasingly preferred over hotels and tented camps.

Sources: Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism, 2024

Investment climate and regulatory considerations

Investors looking for opportunities in Namibia's tourism sector must navigate the country's regulatory framework, which is aimed at industry growth while maintaining high-quality standards. That framework includes:

- The Namibia Tourism Board Act of 2000, which established the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) as the regulatory authority, regulating accommodation registration, tourism promotion, and compliance with sustainability standards.
- Mandatory registration and grading whereby all accommodation establishments must be registered with the NTB, with penalties for non-compliance of up to USD 1,000 or two years' imprisonment, unregistered Airbnb's being a particular target.
- Levies to promote tourism promotion and sustainability initiatives.
- The Environmental Management Act of 2007 mandates environmental impact assessments for new tourism developments, ensuring compliance with sustainability standards.
- The National Policy on Tourism for Namibia, 2008 sets out a framework for sustainability, economic benefits and local community involvement.
- The Labour Act of 2007 and Minimum Wage Regulations regulate employment conditions, ensuring fair wages and working conditions for tourism sector employees.



Workforce challenges and human capital development

The tourism sector faces labour shortages and skills gaps, particularly in hospitality management and tour operations, as there are limited vocational training programmes, and seasonal employment causes income instability for many workers. Long-term employment is depressed by wage disparities and demanding work conditions. Government initiatives like the Sector Skills Plan for Tourism and Hospitality, 2015 and the Domestic Tourism Revitalisation Program, 2021 have been introduced to address these issues. There is, however, a need for formal tour guide certification programmes and improved training implementation to improve service quality and industry professionalism.

Infrastructure development and market accessibility

Expansion projects to improve international access by air travel have been undertaken at Hosea Kutako International, Katima Mulilo, Rundu, and Lüderitz airports, coupled with new routes, such as FlySafair's Cape Town–Windhoek and SAA's Johannesburg–Windhoek flights. Private aviation to remote destinations like the Skeleton Coast and road infrastructure upgrades in areas such as Sossusvlei and Etosha are increasing accessibility for tourists. Environmental concerns stopped a railway project to Sossusvlei, but there are discussions about a toll road. These infrastructure projects are critical for tourism growth but greater private sector involvement is needed, especially in eco-tourism where water scarcity and underdeveloped access to tourism areas remain barriers to expansion.

A sector poised for growth, but challenges remain

Namibia's tourism sector is well-positioned for sustained growth but there is work to be done, particularly in strengthening private-public collaboration to position Namibia as a premier tourism destination while ensuring long-term economic benefits for its people.

Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr has the expertise to guide its clients operating in, or entering this sector, through the various regulatory challenges and to establish the optimal business structures and funding mechanisms.



MARKET RECOGNITION

The way we support and interact with our clients attracts significant external recognition.

Tim Fletcher is the Chairperson and a director in our Dispute Resolution practice. He was ranked by *Chambers Global 2025* as an 'Eminent Practitioner'; a category in which lawyers are ranked as highly influential lawyers and exceptional individuals. *Chambers Global 2022–2024* ranked Tim in Band 2 for dispute resolution. *Chambers Global 2019–2021* ranked him in Band 3 for dispute resolution. *The Legal 500 EMEA 2024–2025* recommended Tim in the 'Hall of Fame' for dispute resolution. *The Legal 500 EMEA 2016–2023* recommended him as a 'Leading Individual' for dispute resolution.



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BBBEE STATUS: LEVEL ONE CONTRIBUTOR

Our BBBEE verification is one of several components of our transformation strategy and we continue to seek ways of improving it in a meaningful manner.

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