



Photo: Armgard Rechholtz



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## Dear Friends of Namibia

As mentioned in our last Newsletter Namibia won the bid to host the next world summit of the **Adventure Travel Trade Association ATTA**. For this summit that takes place from 26. to 31. October 2013 more than 700 Delegates with their family are expected and the preparations are already in full swing. The slogan that has been chosen for this summit is **"Conservancies & Culture"**.

This slogan we adopted for our newsletter since there are several conservancies in Namibia. For this newsletter we picked two of them we want to elaborate on, and not only about the environment but also about the tribes living there.

A conservancy is:

- a legally registered area with clearly defined borders and a constituted management body run by the community for the development of residents and the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism
- managed by a group elected to serve the interests of all its members
- a place where residents can add income from wildlife and tourism to traditional farming activities
- a place where wildlife populations increase as they are managed for productive gain
- a place where the value of the natural resources increases, enhancing the value of the land
- a forum through which services and developments can be channeled and integrated
- zoned for multiple uses to minimize conflict and maximize the interests of all stakeholders

A short history:

Prior to Namibia's independence in 1990, communal area residents had few rights to use wildlife. Wild animals were often seen as little more than a threat to crops, livestock and infrastructure, as well as community safety. Ground-breaking legislation passed in the mid-nineties laid the foundation for a new approach to the sustainable use of natural resources. By forming a conservancy, people in communal areas can now actively manage – and generate benefits from – wildlife and other resources in their area, encouraging wildlife recoveries and environmental restoration. While a conservancy is a natural resource management structure, it is defined by social ties. Conservancies unite groups of people with the common goal of managing their resources. Today, over 60 communal conservancies embrace one in four rural Namibians, underlining a national commitment to both rural development and conservation.

## The Nyae Nyae Conservancy

Nyae Nyae – Ju/'hoansi for „the place without mountains, but rocky“ Registered in February 1998, this is the oldest, as well as second largest conservancy in the country, covering close to 9,000 square kilometers. Botswana creates the eastern border, while to the south, west and north, Ondjou and N=ǀa-Jaqna Conservancies and Khaudum National Park adjoin Nyae Nyae, and in turn border onto other conservancies to form a huge contiguous conservation landscape.

Most of the 2,300 residents are from the Ju/'hoansi ethnic group, a sub-group of the San. The culture of the San is legendary, an often idealized icon of a balanced existence within the natural environment. The San have superb hunting skills and "bush knowledge". Their keen perception and understanding of the environment has allowed them to live in inhospitable ecosystems such as the Kalahari for countless generations. Today, most people in Nyae Nyae no longer live an active hunter-gatherer lifestyle and find themselves very much in a state of cultural transition and social change. Yet wonderful living museums make the past accessible again – for both visitors and a new generation of San no longer in touch with their heritage.

The vast mostly unfenced environment retains a strong wilderness atmosphere, which is enhanced by the fascination of the San culture. Located on the western rim of the Kalahari Basin – the largest accumulation of Sand in the world – much of Nyae Nyae is covered by wind-blown sands. Areas of rocky ground retain seasonal surface water. These pans become a very important wetland after good rains and make birding spectacular. Huge baobabs punctuate the savanna woodland and create a sense of ancient Africa. Nyae Nyae is one of the last refuges of the African wild dog in Namibia and the only place in the country where all of the Big Five occur – elephant, black rhino, lion, buffalo and leopard.



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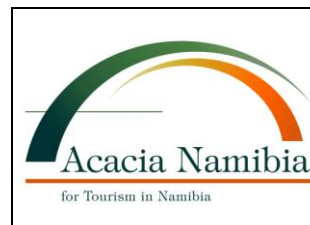
## The Puros Conservancy

Puros – from „omburo“, Otjiherero for „fountain“

This Conservancy has been registered in May 2000, covers an area of over 3,500 square kilometers, but embraces only a small population of around 300 people, most of whom speak Otjihimba. The Himba, who are part of the larger Herero language group, first settled in what is today the Kunene Region around five hundred years ago, arriving from the north. While the main Herero community moved on to settle in central Namibia in the 1750s, some groups stayed in northern Kunene and over time became known as the Himba. The traditional culture of the Himba is iconic. Proud pastoralists herd their cattle across the spectacular landscapes of the north-west, as women in traditional dress, anointed with a mixture of butter fat and red ochre, tend to village chores. While the settlement of Puros has gradually lost many traditional Himba attributes, the nearby Puros Traditional Village allows visitors wonderful insights into the cultural heritage of the Himba, showing practical aspects of daily life and explaining important elements such as the holy fire, and the system of dual descent that governs Himba society. The traditional village also keeps alive a sense of pride in the cultural heritage of the community. While the livelihood of many residents is still based on cattle, goats and sheep, the conservancy has considerably diversified livelihood options by building on the initiatives started prior to independence. A variety of benefits are now being generated from natural resource management. Many new jobs have been created, both in tourism and by the conservancy itself. Controlled hunting in the form of trophy hunting and shoot and sell hunting generates direct income to cover some of the conservancy's running costs. The game meat from both trophy and own-use hunting is distributed to residents. Other benefits created by the conservancy include funeral assistance, and transport for school children and people needing medical attention. Puros has applied for a concession in the adjacent Skeleton Coast Park, which, if awarded, could open exciting new tourism options and generate important benefits for the conservancy.

For more information about the conservancies see

[www.namibiawildlifesafaris.com](http://www.namibiawildlifesafaris.com) or [www.nacso.org.na](http://www.nacso.org.na)



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There are many more conservancies in Namibia and every now and then we will tell you about one of them.

But for our next Newsletter you can expect a "Kaokoveld special". Inspired from the research about the Puros Conservancy that is situated in the Kaokoveld Denise, one of Acacia Namibia's team members is going to explore this remote and harshly beautiful area herself in December. You may look forward to a travel report rich in pictures and first hand information.

"Totsiens" and warm greetings from a cloudy Windhoek

Your

*Acacia Namibia Team*