

An assessment of  
tourism potential in the

**EASTERN  
OMBONDE-  
HOANIB  
PEOPLE'S LANDSCAPE**

to guide  
Tourism Route Development

Helge Denker May 2022





This report was formulated by Helge Denker for GIZ as Deliverable 1 of the consultancy services to develop tourism routes for the Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape (Contract no.: 83393592).

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of GIZ or the many stakeholders of the Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape.

The following documents provided vital background parameters for this report:

- **Integrated Rural Development And Nature Conservation.** January 2021. *Ombonde People's Park (OPP) Tourism Development Plan*; IRDNC, Windhoek.
- **Lindeque, M.** January 2019. *Management plan for the Ombonde People's Park for 2019-2024 (Draft 2)*; Unspecified publisher, Windhoek.
- **Dierkes, K.** 2022. Ombonde Maps. Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations, Windhoek.  
The overview map on page 6 has been adapted with kind permission to serve the illustrative purposes of this report.
- **Dasch N. et al.** 2021. *Genetic constitution and genetic structure of lion populations in northern Namibia*. Ongava Research Centre, Namibian Lion Trust, Desert Lion Conservation, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Kwando Carnivore Project, Technische Universität München.
- **Versfeld, W.** 2022. Maps of lion home ranges and movement in the Hobatere–Ombonde–Hoanib–Etendeka area. Namibian Lion Trust, Kamanjab.  
The map on page 11 is used with kind permission to serve the illustrative purposes of this report.

All photos were taken in the Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape by Helge Denker.

**Helge Denker** has worked in the Namibian tourism and conservation sectors for the past three decades. He has extensive experience in tour guiding and safari operations, as well as tourism development, with a particular focus on the evaluation of tourism potential, the compilation of tourism information materials and the development of tourism routes.

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Most recently, Helge has published a comprehensive guidebook on Namibia's nature parks, featuring all state parks and two large private reserves, and highlighting the role of community conservation areas within the Namibian conservation and tourism landscape. This initiative was co-funded by the Gondwana Collection Namibia and was carried out in close liaison with the MEFT.

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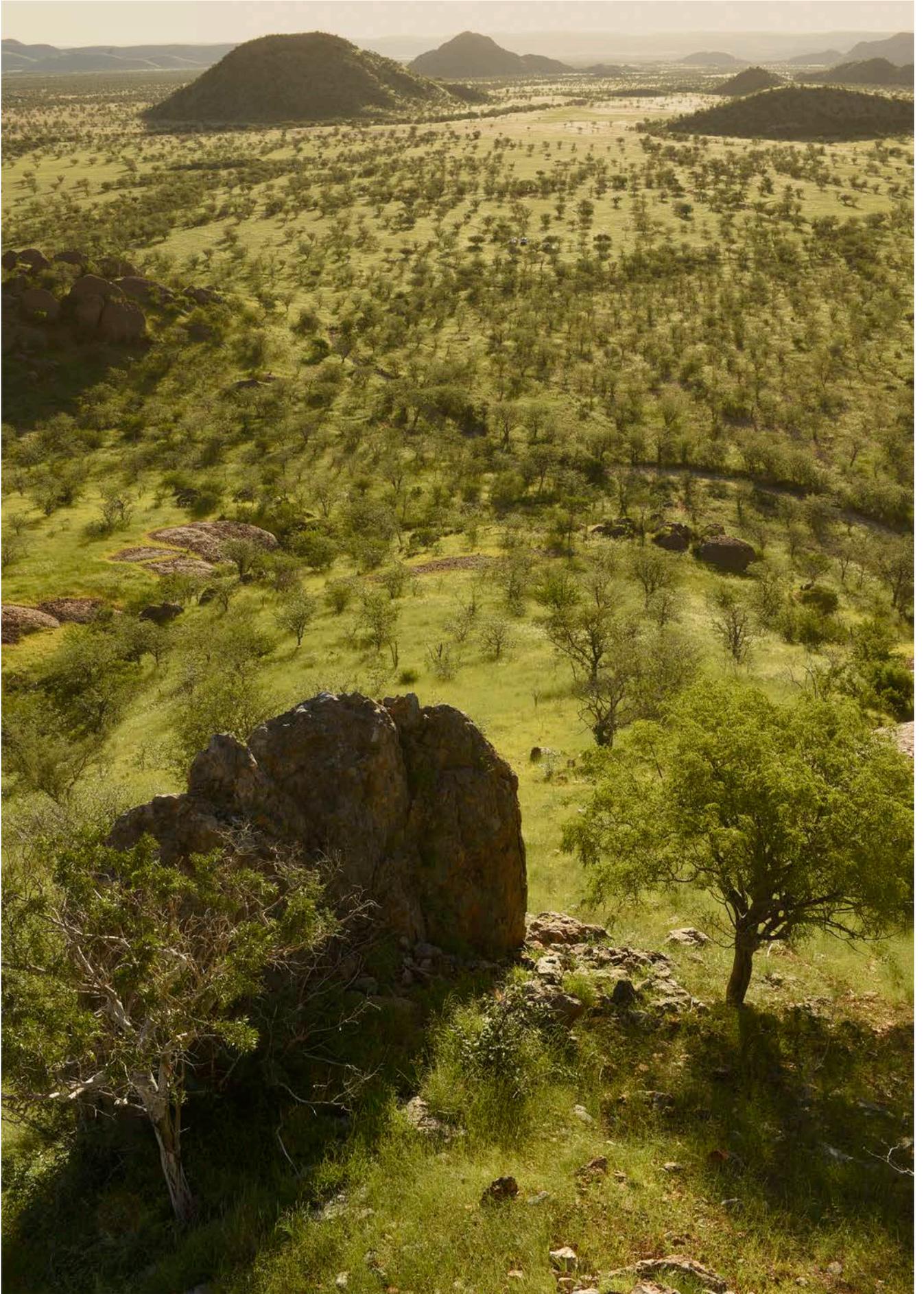
# OMBONDE- HOANIB

## PEOPLE'S LANDSCAPE

to guide  
Tourism Route Development



*The remote wilderness atmosphere,  
coupled with stunning and diverse landscapes,  
the presence of charismatic large wildlife –  
and the knowledge that this is a people's landscape –  
create the primary attraction for visiting Ombonde–Hoanib*



*More than a designated conservation area, Ombonde–Hoanib is a landscape; view west from Elephant Rocks in the Northern Buffer Zone, north of the Ombonde River*



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*Ombonde–Hoanib embraces rich biodiversity ranging from elephants to insects and from giant ana trees to delicate small herbs*

*A cryptically coloured juvenile gecko blends into the pebbled ground*

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# 1 — BACKGROUND



*Ombonde–Hoanib is a people's landscape – managed by representatives of the local landholders in the best interests of communities and conservation ... and with the people utilising parts of the larger landscape for their livelihood needs*

*Hartmann's mountain zebras graze in the vicinity of a communal farming settlement in Anabeb Conservancy*

The Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area is the largest contiguous community conservation area in Namibia, with about 40 adjoining community conservancies stretching from the Kunene River to the Swakop River and from the Skeleton Coast Park to Etosha National Park, covering approximately 78,000 square kilometres.

The Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape is a joint initiative between the Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies to create an overarching protected area that links the core conservation areas of the conservancies. Neighbouring Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies have expressed interest in being part of the initiative, but no areas in these conservancies have been designated as part of the people's landscape at this stage.

The people's landscape will facilitate linkages between Etosha National Park and the Hobatere Tourism Concession in the east and the Etendeka and Palmwag tourism concessions in the west, which in turn abut the Skeleton Coast National Park. This large-landscape connectivity will create important wildlife movement corridors. While the Etosha boundary is fenced and the Red

Line Veterinary Fence creates a barrier along the southern edge of the area, the remainder of the landscape is completely unfenced.

The Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area features breathtaking topography and fascinating geomorphology, and is characterised by an arid to semi-arid climate. More than a dozen large ephemeral rivers create linear oases across the dry lands, carrying occasional runoff west towards the Atlantic coast. Indigenous vegetation is sparse but diverse and unique, with numerous endemic and near endemic plants. Enchanting desert-adapted wildlife roams freely across the landscape, including elephant, giraffe, black rhino, lion, leopard, cheetah, hyaenas, zebras, ostrich and a variety of antelopes (most notably gemsbok, springbok and black-faced impala). People have utilised this land for countless millennia, confirmed by stunning rock art and an abundance of other archaeological evidence.

Today the area is designated as communal farmland. About 60,000 people live here, with livestock herding representing the most important rural livelihood. Land tenure is a legacy of colonial rule – the Damaraland and Kaokoland 'homelands' were created as part of apartheid policies during



the South African administration of Namibia prior to independence. This was a period of severe development neglect that has impacts to the present day.

Erongo–Kunene features some of Namibia’s most impressive natural and cultural tourism attractions, including the Twyfelfontein World Heritage Site, the Brandberg National Monument Area and Epupa Falls, as well as a diverse and vibrant mix of modern and traditional cultures. Ephemeral rivers represent important but fragile tourism focal points. The unique desert-adapted wildlife of the area is a key attraction. Erongo–Kunene is still widely known by the broad ‘Damaraland’ and ‘Kaoko’ tourism-destination monikers, which were historically seen as wilderness areas with few travel restrictions, allowing unencumbered travel and wild camping.

Tourism development in Erongo–Kunene has focused mainly on the establishment of accommodation (ideally as a joint-venture with a conservancy) and activities such as game drives or cultural visits linked to accommodation enterprises. Only a limited number of the area’s tourism attractions have seen targeted destination or site development. Tourism development urgently needs to be extended to other tourism products.

The diverse features of Ombonde–Hoanib offer the potential to develop the people’s landscape into a primary destination within Erongo–Kunene. This also represents a great opportunity to diversify the tourism profile of the larger region. To achieve this, developments in Ombonde–Hoanib must be integrated and cohesive, and must create a strong overall destination identity.

Current tourism movement in Erongo–Kunene is largely restricted to four-by-four access by the rugged terrain. The domestic and regional four-by-four market is a significant component of tourism traffic, yet overseas visitors make up increasing tourist volumes. Four-by-four routes are currently defined largely by Tracks4Africa GPS maps, routes published on four-by-four forums on the internet, and a number of other route publications. Many routes have been opened up by enthusiasts who are part of the Tracks4Africa community.

Current four-by-four travel in the Erongo–Kunene is largely uncontrolled and has a significant environmental footprint, particularly through indiscriminate off-road driving and broad, corrugated thoroughfares that cause massive road deterioration, destructive firewood collection in sensitive areas, and littering. Conversely, the sector generates negligible returns for local communities.

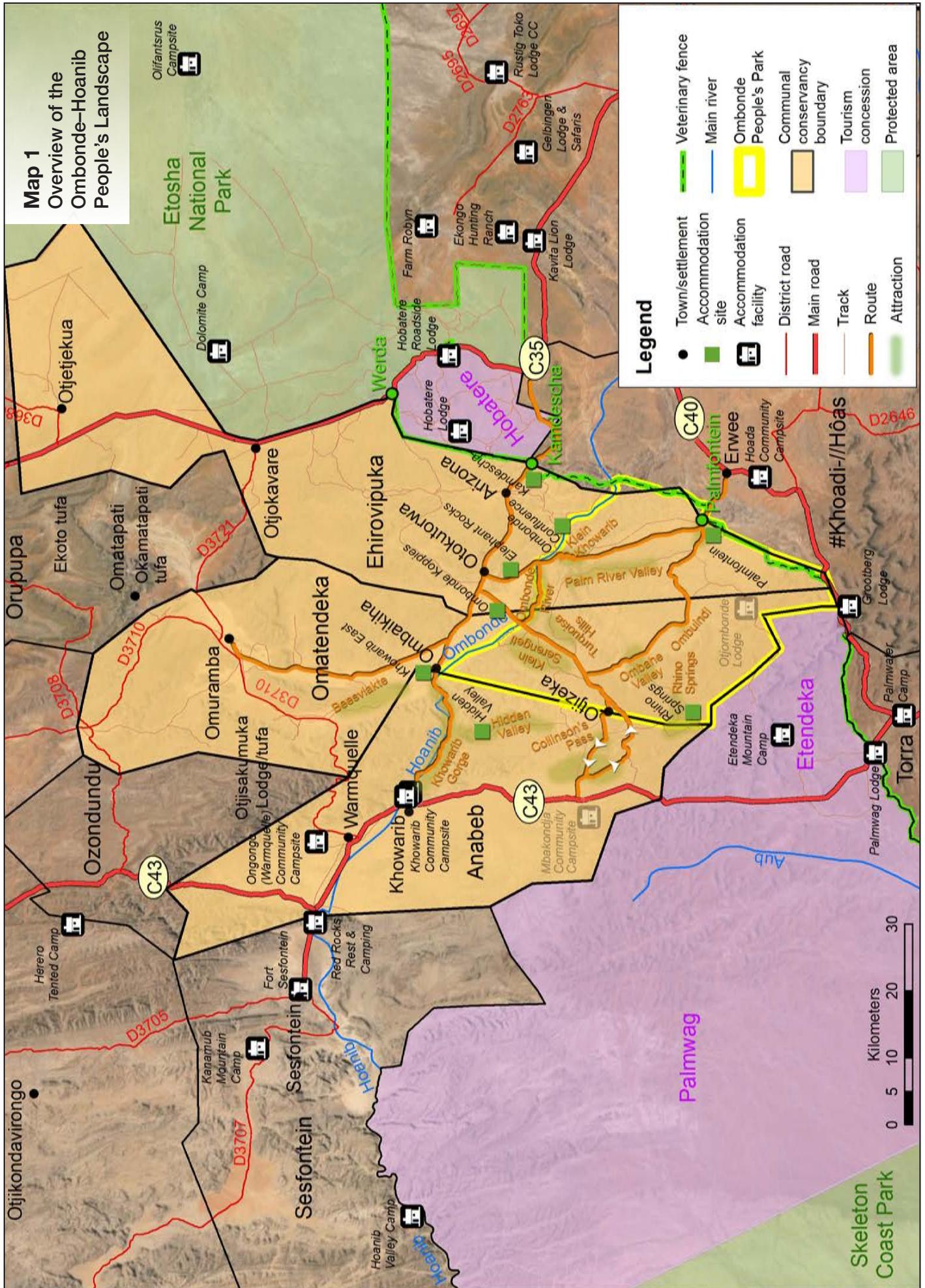
There is an urgent need to channel current tourism travel – and particularly four-by-four travel – in the area onto routes identified by local communities and the community-conservation sector as preferred routes. Targeted and strategic route development in Ombonde–Hoanib is seen as an important part of this aim.

Formal proclamation of the Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape as a protected area in the form of a ‘landscapes of special conservation importance’ depends on the promulgation of the Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill. This would replace a number of existing acts, including the Nature Conservation Ordinance 4 of 1975 and the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act 9 of 2008. The Wildlife and Protected Areas Management Bill has been under discussion for over 20 years and it is uncertain when promulgation might take place.

While the bill would formalise the status of Ombonde–Hoanib, conservation management and tourism development of the Ombonde–Hoanib area are possible ahead of the introduction of the new legislation. A range of development steps have taken place, including extensive community consultations, the formulation of a draft management plan, the formulation of a tourism development plan, and wide-ranging stakeholder consultation that has included private-sector engagement.

The identification of preliminary tourism routes in Ombonde–Hoanib represents a next step in unlocking the potential of Ombonde–Hoanib as a primary tourism destination in northwestern Namibia.





The map provides an overview of the Ombonde–Hoanib Landscape to illustrate key aspects discussed in this report; the map is not intended for navigational use; map courtesy of NACSO

## 2 PROJECT APPROACH



*The approach to assessing tourism potential to guide tourism route development in Ombonde–Hoanib is based on the premiss that visitors seek a personal experience and a sense of place that is created through strategic access to distinctive sites and attributes*

*The consultant's vehicle on the Klein Serengeti during the field trip for this consultancy*

### KEY POINTS

- The interim name Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape has been chosen in agreement with conservancy representatives
- Ombonde–Hoanib is an evolving community conservation area
- Landscape boundaries have not been finalised
- The landscape has not been formally proclaimed
- A portion of the currently defined landscape has not been registered as a conservancy
- A draft management plan (2019) exists, which provides clear management parameters for the people's landscape once it has been proclaimed
- A tourism development plan (2021) exists, which explores a range of tourism development options and provides key recommendations
- A partly-developed lodge in the south of Ombonde–Hoanib has been dormant since 2014; no other tourism facilities exist in Ombonde–Hoanib
- A number of rough tracks traverse the area; all require four-wheel-drive vehicles
- Some routes through the area and wider landscape form part of Tracks4Africa routes;

these are utilised by low numbers of visitors

- Tourism development in Ombonde–Hoanib is envisaged to evolve from self-drive camping visitors to high-end lodge visitors
- Settlement, livestock grazing and small-scale mining are carried out in the defined core area

### PROJECT FOCUS

- The dual focus of this consultancy is to:
  - assess tourism attractions in Ombonde–Hoanib for the potential development of tourism accommodation and eco-enterprises
  - develop tourism-route information materials that enable access to and links between attractions in Ombonde–Hoanib by utilise the existing tracks, and to combine these with other destinations in the wider landscape
- Considering the diverse unresolved aspects and the evolving nature of Ombonde–Hoanib tourism development, all routes defined as part of this consultancy must be considered preliminary
- This report serves as a contextual background document to the tourism route materials developed as Deliverable 2 of this consultancy

## PROJECT AREA

- For the purposes of this consultancy, the boundaries of the landscape were defined by the Ombonde River in the north and the boundaries of Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies in the east and west, respectively; a wedge of currently unproclaimed land between the two conservancies in the south is being prepared for registration, with approximately equal areas apportioned to each of the conservancies
- Since the completion of this consultancy, Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies, situated to the west of the defined landscape, have expressed a firm commitment to allocating portions of their areas to create a much larger people's landscape
- It is thus recommended to treat the area east of the C43 main road as the Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape, and the area west of the C43 main road as the Western Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape
- This report only covers Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib as defined above
- Draft Namibian legislation provides for formally proclaimed 'landscapes of special conservation importance', managed through agreements between landholders and government
- The Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape is working towards formal proclamation as such a landscape
- Ombonde–Hoanib is an open landscape (with the exception of the Red Line Veterinary Fence); no physical conservancy boundaries are demarcated
- For the purposes of visitor experiences, the exact boundaries of conservancies are irrelevant; it is obviously acknowledged that conservancy boundaries are vital for management and benefit-generation purposes
- This report treats the area between the Ombonde River in the north, the Red Line Veterinary Fence in the east, the fringes of the Grootberg in the south and the Khowarib Escarpment in the West as the core area of Ombonde–Hoanib
- The Ombaikiha–Outokotorwa–Kamdescha Track delineates a 'Northern Buffer Zone', while

the C43 Road (gravel) delineates a 'Western Buffer Zone' (in Anabeb Conservancy)

- For the purposes of this consultancy, the wider Ombonde–Hoanib Landscape is framed by the roads C35, C40, C43, D3710 (Warmquelle–Omuramba) and D3721 (Omuramba–Otjokavare) [clockwise from northeast]

## PLACE NAMES AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following place names and spellings are used throughout this report; where no place names could be determined, provisional names have been created to refer to particular areas or sites; if any names are considered inappropriate, these can be changed during the development of the landscape

- **In this report the name *Ombonde–Hoanib* refers to the *Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape*, while *Ombonde River* and *Hoanib River* are used in references to the river that has given the landscape its name**
- **4x4** – (also four-by-four, 4WD) refers to four-wheel drive vehicles that can engage front and rear-wheel drive to traverse difficult terrain
- **Arizona** – settlement at the edge of the Northern Buffer Zone in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy
- **Beesvlakte** – Afrikaans for cattle plain; originally the name of a large plain southwest of the Omuramba settlement; as plural Beesvlaktes also used for the large plains directly north of the Ombonde River along its western course near the Khowarib Gorge
- **Collinson's Pass** – spectacular pass named after conservation legend Roger Collinson, based on a memorable first drive down the pass during the field trip for this consultancy; locally called Okomimunu
- **Elephant Rocks** – scenic site in the Northern Buffer Zone in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy, named after the elephant-shaped rocks that dominate the area
- **Hidden Valley** – secluded valley in the Western Buffer Zone in Anabeb Conservancy
- **Kaoko** – (formerly also Kaokoland, Kaokoveld, now the Kunene Region) the communal lands of northwestern Namibia as a tourism destination
- **Khowarib Gorge** – (also Khowarib Schlucht, Khowarib Canyon) spectacular gorge of



the Hoanib River through the Khowarib Escarpment; the German descriptor Schlucht should be replaced with gorge (or alternatively canyon), as Khowarib is not a German name; the word Khowarib is derived from Khoekhoegowab, ||khowa means open and the name of the settlement Khowarib just west of the gorge may refer to the fact that the gorge has opened out here

- **Klein Khowarib** – (in both Afrikaans and German, klein means small or little) a gorge reminiscent of Khowarib Gorge in Ombonde–Hoanib, delineated by a tributary of the Ombonde River; locally called Epako-raTjomitjira
- **Klein Serengeti** – named after the Serengeti Plains in east-central Africa (derived from Maasai, meaning endless plain); although entrenched, the foreign name is not considered entirely appropriate for a uniquely Namibian place; locally called Orutjandja-ruaTjingambu
- **Ombaikiha** – (also Ombaiki, Umumbaati, Haaibaaidjie) settlement at the eastern end of Khowarib Gorge in Anabeb Conservancy, named after Ombaikiha, the Otjiherero word for jacket
- **Ombonde Confluence** – confluence of the Otjovasandu and Ombonde rivers in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy
- **Ombonde Koppies** – scenic site in the Northern Buffer Zone in Omatendeka Conservancy; locally called Oruhungu-roHandukaze
- **Ombonde–Hoanib River** – large ephemeral river that originates near Kamanjab and is variously called the Honib (during its early course across relatively flat highlands west of Kamanjab); Ombonde in its middle section and finally Hoanib (from its passage through the Khowarib Gorge to the Atlantic); the Ombonde River delineates the current northern boundary of the Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape and has given the area its name; Ombonde is the Otjiherero name for the camel thorn (the exact origin of the Khoekhoegowab word Hoanib could not be determined)
- **Ounguindi** – (also Ombuindi) waterpoint in Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Otjizeka** – (also Otjitheka) settlement in Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape in Omatendeka Conservancy
- **Otjokavare** – (also Khowares) settlement along C35 in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy
- **Otjombonde Lodge** – (also Omatendeka Lodge, Otjomumbonde Lodge) dormant lodge in the south of Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Otjovasandu** – ephemeral river originating in Western Etosha that is a major tributary of the Ombonde River
- **Outokotorwa** – (also Otokutorua) settlement at edge of Northern Buffer Zone in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy
- **Ombahe Valley** – (Otjiherero for giraffe) scenic area in Ombonde–Hoanib known for high concentrations of giraffe
- **Palmfontein** – (Afrikaans for palm spring) scenic area in Ombonde–Hoanib dominated by makalani palms
- **Palm River Valley** – long valley stretching the length of the Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area from south to north, created by the Palm River and its tributaries, which all flow into the Ombonde River
- **Red Line Veterinary Fence** – a veterinary cordon fence erected to stop the spread of livestock diseases from northern Namibia into the commercial farming areas; the fence runs from the Botswana–Namibia border in the east to far into the Namib Desert in the west
- **Turquoise Hills** – rugged hills in the centre of Ombonde–Hoanib where small-scale mining for a bright turquoise mineral is being carried out
- **Vet Gate** – veterinary control gate at access point along the Red Line Veterinary Fence

### 3 — THE VALUE OF OMBONDE–HOANIB PEOPLE’S LANDSCAPE



*Ombonde–Hoanib has great environmental and cultural wealth that can form the basis for wonderful visitor experiences*

*The delicate flowers of the yellow mouse-whiskers are a prominent feature of the rainy-season vegetation in Ombonde–Hoanib*

#### KEY POINTS

- Ombonde–Hoanib is a people’s landscape, which should strive to fulfil the following fundamental objectives:
  - **Landscape and biodiversity conservation**
  - **Rare-species protection**
  - **Tangible community returns**
  - **Valuable visitor experiences**
- The objectives are interlinked, but are all dependent on the primary objective of effective landscape and biodiversity conservation
- A part of the Ombonde–Hoanib vision is to create important landscape-level conservation linkages between Etosha National Park, the Hobatere, Etendeka and Palmwag tourism concessions, and the Skeleton Coast National Park; within the confines of the current Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area boundaries, this vision is not yet achievable, as significant linkage barriers exist
- It is vital for the long-term viability of Ombonde–Hoanib to remove current barriers and achieve landscape-level connectivity
- Rare-species protection is a central objective of modern conservation efforts, as organised poaching targeting rhinos, elephant, large predators and other biodiversity has impacted heavily on species viability; Ombonde–Hoanib provides important protection to elephant, black rhino, lion, leopard, cheetah, hyaenas, black-faced impala and other vulnerable biodiversity
- Ombonde–Hoanib has the potential to generate significant returns for local communities through strategic tourism development
- The diverse topographical and biodiversity features of Ombonde–Hoanib, coupled with its unique status as a people’s landscape, provide the potential for personally valuable and unforgettable visitor experiences
- Ombonde–Hoanib embraces a unique combination of great environmental and cultural wealth, which requires sensitive, holistic approaches to be realised for the balanced benefit of local communities, visitors and the environment



## THE VALUE OF LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY

- In arid and semi-arid systems, landscape-level connectivity that enables wildlife movement is vital for the population health of many species
- Etosha National Park is Namibia's premier wildlife conservation area and home to the largest populations of many species
- The Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area (including the Etendeka, Hobatere and Palmwag tourism concessions) is Namibia's premier community conservation area and a vital range for free-roaming, desert-adapted wildlife
- The Skeleton Coast National Park is Namibia's iconic coastal desert park and an important seasonal range for desert-adapted wildlife
- Within this context, Ombonde–Hoanib enables vital wildlife protection, landscape connectivity and genetic exchange for free-roaming wildlife; this is particularly important in an environment that forces wildlife to move over large areas in response to rainfall and food availability

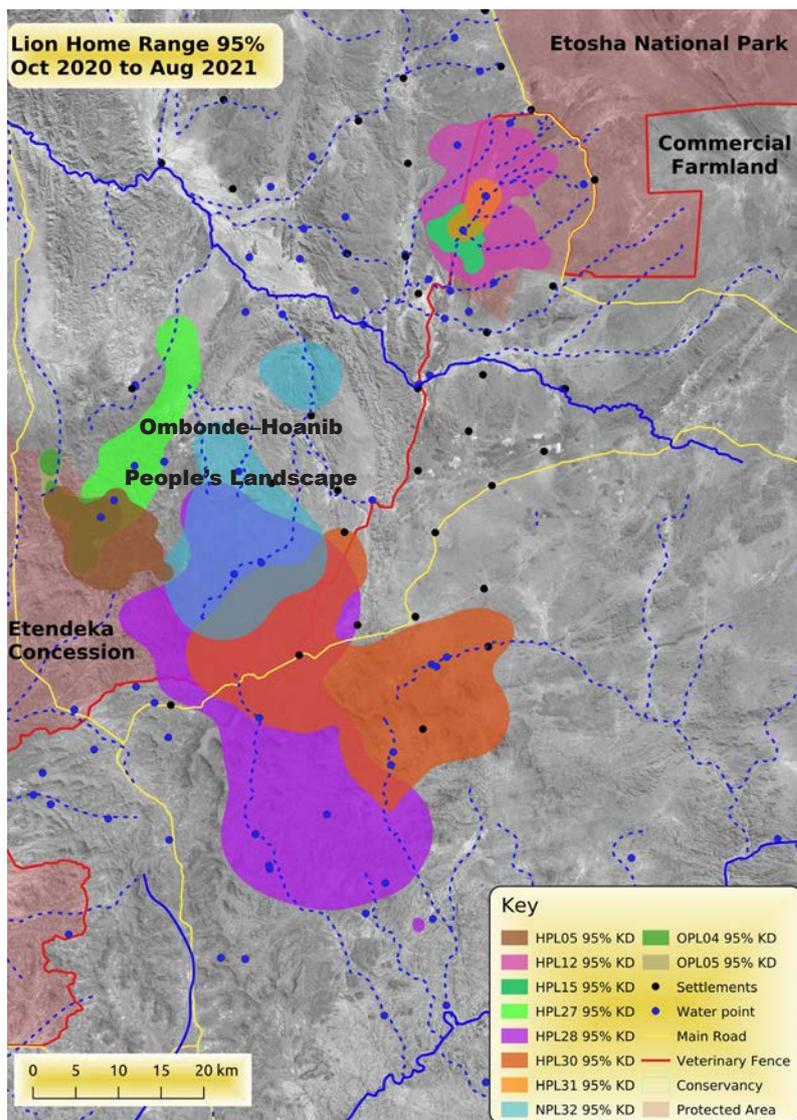
## THE LION AS INDICATOR SPECIES

- As an apex predator, the lion is an important indicator of environmental health; lions can only survive in areas with abundant natural prey and limited human threats
- Fragmentation of lion populations into small, isolated sub-populations is one of the biggest threats to the survival of Africa's lions
- A recent genetic study of Namibian lion populations\* shows that significant barriers to genetic exchange exist across the lions' range in Namibia
- The highest genetic exchange occurs between the Skeleton Coast–Erongo–Kunene and Hobatere populations; i.e. these lions breed most easily across their range and have the lowest genetic barrier
- By contrast, a major barrier exists between the Etosha population and the northeastern population (Khaudum, Bwabwata, Mudumu, Mamili, Kavango and Zambezi community conservation areas)
- Conversely, the lions of northwestern Namibia have a low genetic diversity, because there is only local and no regional genetic exchange
- By contrast, the lions of northeastern Namibia have a high genetic diversity, because there is genetic exchange with populations in Botswana, Zambia and Angola
- Ombonde–Hoanib clearly creates a vital link for genetic exchange between the lions of Etosha–Hobatere and Etendeka–Palmwag–Skeleton Coast
- A current barrier to this linkage is created by human activity in the area between the Ombonde River and Hobatere

\* Dasch N. et al. 2021. *Genetic constitution and genetic structure of lion populations in northern Namibia*. Ongava Research Centre, Namibian Lion Trust, Desert Lion Conservation, Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Kwando Carnivore Project, Technische Universität München.

*Remote tracking of lions in the Hobatere–Ombonde–Hoanib–Etendeka area clearly shows the importance of Ombonde–Hoanib within the lions' home ranges, the potential linkages across the landscape, and the current barrier that exists*

Map courtesy of Namibian Lion Trust



## 4\_\_ OMBONDE – HOANIB’S LOCATION WITHIN THE WIDER TOURISM LANDSCAPE



*Ombonde–Hoanib is ideally located between key destinations and tourism thoroughfares in northwestern Namibia*

*A scenic section of the C43, the main artery into the northwestern parts of Erongo–Kunene, the former Kaokoland*

### KEY POINTS

- The Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area is Namibia’s famous wilderness adventure sector; Ombonde–Hoanib forms an important component of this
- Ombonde–Hoanib is ideally located between a number of primary tourism destinations – for Namibia and for Erongo–Kunene; these include the Etosha and Skeleton Coast national parks, the Palmwag, Etendeka and Hobatere tourism concessions, the main 4x4 circuit of Kaoko, and more locally the Grootberg and Khowarib Gorge
- Ombonde–Hoanib is enfolded on three sides by key tourism thoroughfares, the C35, C40 and C43 roads, which are all well-maintained
- However, neighbouring destinations provide similar attractions to Ombonde–Hoanib with generally easier access
- The strength of Ombonde–Hoanib lies in its combination of wilderness, diverse landscapes and wildlife in the setting of a people’s landscape

### SURROUNDING ATTRACTIONS

- **Etosha National Park** – this is Namibia’s primary environmental attraction, offering world-class game-viewing accessible by two-wheel-drive and bus; camping visitors form an important visitor segment and the Olifantsrus Campsite in Western Etosha has become a popular site that offers easy linkages and can result in important visitor flows to Ombonde–Hoanib
  - *importantly, wildlife densities in Ombonde–Hoanib are very low compared to Etosha and Ombonde–Hoanib destination marketing must emphasise a different product*
- **Skeleton Coast National Park** – this park is generally visited in transit from Etosha and surrounding destinations to the towns at the central coast, by fishermen staying at Terrace Bay, and by a low number of visitors to the exclusive Shipwreck Lodge; while a route linkage to Ombonde–Hoanib exists, this is not considered significant in terms of visitor volumes



- **Kaoko 4x4 circuit** – the 4x4 circuit from Sesfontein west into the Hoanib River and northwest to Puros, the Marienfluss, Epupa Falls and other destinations in the area is one of the most popular 4x4 sectors in Namibia; linkages to these visitor flows are considered central to channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Eastern Kunene and Epupa Falls** – this ‘easy access option’ to some of the attractions of Erongo–Kunene includes important visitor flows through the wider area and is considered important for channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Palmwag, Etendeka and Hobatere tourism concessions** – these concessions provide comparable wilderness and wildlife experiences to Ombonde–Hoanib and can offer exciting destination combinations that are considered important for channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Twyfelfontein World Heritage Site** – this is Namibia’s primary rock art site accessible by two-wheel-drive and bus; the site draws significant visitor volumes into the wider landscape and is considered important for channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Northern Highlands conservancies** – a range of significant tourist attractions have been identified in the conservancies north of Ombonde–Hoanib; these are currently undeveloped, but represent important future destination linkages
- **Grootberg and Khowrib Gorge** – these two natural features are important local attractions in the area, made accessible by the Grootberg and Khowarib lodges; they are considered important for channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib
- **C43 (gravel)** – links Skeleton Coast–Twyfelfontein–Palmwag–Etendeka–Khowarib–Northern Highlands Conservancies–Sesfontein–Kaoko 4x4 circuit

The following roads are secondary and require maintenance, but create a northern connecting loop between the C35 and C43, and play a role in channelling visitors into Ombonde–Hoanib:

- **D3710 (gravel; requires maintenance)** – links C43–Northern Highlands Conservancies–D3721
- **D3721 (single track 4x4)** – links C35–Northern Highlands Conservancies–D3710

## KEY TOURISM THOROUGHFARES

The following roads are important in linking the attractions discussed above (see also Section 10. Ombonde–Hoanib tourism route development, pp. 26–28):

- **C35 (tar)** – links Kamanjab–Hobatere–Etosha–Northern Highlands Conservancies–Opuwo–Epupa Falls–Kaoko 4x4 circuit
- **C40 (gravel)** – links C35–Etosha–Kamanjab–Grootberg–Palmwag–C43

## 5 — OMBONDE– HOANIB’S SETTING AND ACCESS



*Ombonde–Hoanib is set in wild, rugged and inaccessible topography*

*A rainy-season view across the Beesvlaktes towards the Ombonde River and the mountains of Klein Khowarib*

### KEY POINTS

- Ombonde–Hoanib is set in a rugged landscape of rocky mountains, hills and ridges interlaced by the valleys and gullies of ephemeral watercourses; few broader expanses of flat ground are found in Ombonde–Hoanib; Klein Serengeti and its northern extension, the Beesvlaktes (north of the Ombonde River), are the most notable exceptions
- The current Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area measures approximately 50 km along its longest north–south axis, and 35 km east to west; it covers an area of approximately 1,050 km<sup>2</sup>
- The rugged topography of the area limits access to four-wheel-drive vehicles, and average travelling speeds to less than 20 km/h
- The Ombonde–Hoanib management plan lists only four access points for visitors, which are envisaged in time to be controlled by manned entry gates
- Some access points are currently used by transit visitors, based on Tracks4Africa routes

- A number of additional access points are used by local communities
- To ensure controlled access to Ombonde–Hoanib and mitigate visitor impacts, final access points should be defined as soon as possible

### OMBONDE–HOANIB ACCESS/ENTRY POINTS

- A number of tracks currently reach Ombonde–Hoanib from different directions; many of these have been created by local communities to access settlements, cattle posts and small mines in the area
- The draft management plan recommends that only the following four access points should be developed for visitors; these access points are envisaged to be controlled by manned entry gates once the landscape is proclaimed:
- **Palmfontein** (southeast) from C40 via Erwee & Palmfontein Vet Gate (±7 km from Erwee to Palmfontein Vet Gate)



- **Outokotorwa** (north)  
from D3710 via Beesvlaktes; from C35 via Arizona; from C35 via Kamdescha Vet Gate (varying distances depending on chosen tracks)
- **Otjizeka** (west)  
directly from C43
- **Otjovasandu–Ombonde Confluence** (northeast)  
from C35 via Kamdescha Vet Gate  
(±17 km from C35 to Kamdescha Vet Gate)

#### ENTRY POINT RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Palmfontein, Outokotorwa** and **Otjizeka** are endorsed as the three most suitable current access points
- **Otjizeka** is considered the primary access point to Ombonde–Hoanib from the west; the draft management plan considers the settlement of Otjizeka on the boundary between Anabeb and Omatendeka conservancies as the physical entry location, yet the rugged mountains of the Khowarib Escarpment and the Etendeka Lavas allow only a narrow area of entry from the west and it would be advantageous to locate the entry point directly along the C43; two entry/exit tracks from the C43 are currently in use, which are ±8 km apart; though shorter, the southern track should at some stage be closed to visitor traffic to have only one Otjizeka entry/exit point; the northern track initially passes settlements close to the C43; beyond the settlements it forks to provide three route options:
  - a northern route to the Klein Serengeti [this should remain closed to self-drive visitors]
  - a middle route traversing Collinson’s Pass [to limit erosion this should only be driven down east to west, never up west to east]; this is part of the current Tracks4Africa ‘Otjitheka Trail’
  - a southern route that bi-passes Collinson’s Pass, which should be considered the main entry route from west to east
- **Palmfontein** is currently considered the primary access point to Ombonde–Hoanib from the southeast; it has the shortest and easiest access track from the C40 at Erwee to the landscape boundary (±7 km); this is part of the current Tracks4Africa ‘Otjitheka Trail’
- **Outokotorwa** is currently considered the primary access point to Ombonde–Hoanib from the north, this currently consists of two entry/exit points along the Ombaikiha–Outokotorwa–Kamdescha Track, which are ±3 km apart, separated by parallel mountain ridges for a distance of ± 6 km, making a connecting track unfeasible; both are considered important access routes to the Northern Buffer Zone and Ombonde; the Ombaikiha–Outokotorwa–Kamdescha Track may be accessed via a number of routes: from the C43 at Khowarib via the Khowarib Gorge; from the D3710 via several tracks traversing the Beesvlaktes; from the C35 via Omumborumbonga to Arizona, Werda to Arizona or directly via the Kamdescha Vet Gate
- **Otjovasandu–Ombonde Confluence** should be considered a restricted access entry point; this route requires long stretches of riverbed driving that is considered ecologically sensitive; the route passes directly in front of the proposed Ombonde Confluence lodge site; the route is not needed as a general visitor access point and should be reserved for occasional entry by special interest groups only (Outokotorwa is a better northern access option for general visitors)
- **Khowarib** is a current entry point to the ‘Khowarib Gorge 4WD Trail’; this exits the gorge at Ombaikiha, with the option of continuing along the Ombonde River; the Ombonde River section should be closed to visitor traffic, as long stretches of riverbed driving are considered ecologically sensitive; visitors should instead use the Ombaikiha–Outokotorwa–Kamdescha Track, with the potential option of driving a central ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Loop’ from Outokotorwa via Ombonde Koppies to the Ombonde River and back to Outokotorwa via Elephant Rocks
- **Controlled access/manned gates** – initially, preferred access routes can be promoted by publishing only these on visitor maps and other information materials; it is expected that few visitors will ignore these guidelines; once manned access gates become a reality, solutions to dissuade unwanted access along other tracks will need to be found



## 6 — OMBONDE – HOANIB’S ATTRACTIONS



*The remote wilderness atmosphere, coupled with stunning and diverse landscapes, the presence of charismatic large wildlife – and the knowledge that this is a people’s landscape – create the primary attraction for visiting Ombonde–Hoanib*

*A martial eagle – a symbol of wild places – soars across a sky of storm clouds above Ombonde–Hoanib*

### KEY POINTS

- The remote wilderness atmosphere, coupled with stunning and diverse landscapes, the presence of charismatic large wildlife – and the knowledge that this is a people’s landscape – create the primary attraction for visiting the area
- Ombonde–Hoanib’s diverse features include:
  - remote wilderness realm
  - diverse, spectacular landscapes
  - charismatic large wildlife
  - other interesting biodiversity
  - fascinating geomorphology
  - cultural sites
  - community conservation
  - exclusive experiences
- It must be emphasised that the overall attraction of Ombonde–Hoanib lies in the combination of its features; sensitive development is required to safeguard this combination and thus keep the overall attraction intact
- Detailed descriptions of the key attractions of Ombonde–Hoanib will be formulated as part of

Deliverable 2 of this consultancy, which consists of tourism route information materials

### PRIMARY ATTRACTIONS

- **Wilderness realm** – Ombonde–Hoanib is a rugged wilderness that is accessible to visitors only by four-wheel drive vehicle (or fly-in by charter airplane, followed by 4x4 activities); this defines the fundamental character of the area and is in itself a key attraction
- **Landscape diversity** – Ombonde–Hoanib stretches from the Etendeka Lavas in the south to the vast plains of the Klein Serengeti and the Ombonde River in the north, embracing diverse and attractive geomorphology
- **Charismatic wildlife** – Ombonde–Hoanib is home to four of the big five – elephant, black rhino, lion and leopard; other large wildlife includes giraffe, Hartmann’s mountain zebra, spotted hyaena, eland, kudu, gemsbok, black-faced impala, springbok, duiker, steenbok and warthog



## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

- **Biodiversity** – Ombonde–Hoanib embraces diverse and interesting biodiversity; birdlife includes numerous raptors, mountain, woodland and grassland birds, seasonal migrants and most of Namibia’s sought-after near-endemic birds; diverse reptiles, amphibians and insects inhabit the area, including Namibian endemics; mopane trees visually dominate the flora, which also includes conspicuous leadwood, corkwood ringwood, shepherd’s and ana trees, purple-pod terminalia, kudu-bush, trumpet-thorn, as well as an abundance of interesting and unusual smaller plants, with the flora varying sharply between dry and rainy seasons
- **Local culture** – local cultures are an important tourist attraction that is often ignored in tourism development; traditional Himba culture is a primary attraction for visitors to northwestern Namibia; traditional Herero culture is one of the iconic cultures of Namibia, as is San culture; Himba and Herero are the main residents of the wider Ombonde–Hoanib landscape; a number of rock art sites exist in the wider landscape, which are commonly attributed to San hunter-gatherers (although authorship of rock art created several millennia ago is impossible to conclusively attribute to the ancestors of any one modern ethnic group)
  - **nomadic livestock herders** – numerous livestock posts are located in Ombonde–Hoanib; some are still in use; these should be seen as part of the attraction of a people’s landscape (although the presence of livestock in the Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area must be carefully managed)
  - **hunter-gatherer past** – the rock art in the wider Ombonde–Hoanib landscape, while not as spectacular as other Namibian rock art sites, should be incorporated as carefully managed attractions
- **Community conservation** – the knowledge that Ombonde–Hoanib is a people’s landscape that benefits rural communities is an important aspect of the overall attraction for visitors
- **Geomorphology** – Ombonde–Hoanib embraces diverse and stunning geomorphological features, from the vast Etendeka Lavas in the south via schist and

sandstone hills to the broad silt deposits of the Klein Serengeti and Beesvlaktes, to the intriguing conglomerate outcrops of Elephant Rocks

## SITE ATTRACTIONS

- **Khowarib Gorge** – a spectacular gorge of towering cliffs of sheer dolomite rock in the Khowarib Escarpment, with the Hoanib River meandering along its floor, creating occasional springs lined by Ana trees, mustard bushes and isolated makalani palms; this is currently the best-known site attraction in the landscape (also known as Khowarib Schlucht or Khowarib Canyon); the word Khowarib is derived from Khoekhoegowab, ||khowa means open and the name of the settlement Khowarib just west of the gorge may refer to the fact that the gorge has opened out here
- **Klein Khowarib** – a spectacular gorge in dolomite hills reminiscent of Khowarib Gorge; this smaller gorge is delineated by an unnamed tributary of the Ombonde River (in both Afrikaans and German, klein means small or little); locally called Epako-raTjomitjira
- **Ombonde–Hoanib River** – a meandering sand river cut deep into the surrounding landscape, lined by lush vegetation made up of large mopane, ana and camel thorn trees, mustard bushes; this large ephemeral river originates near Kamanjab and is initially called the Honib along its early course across relatively flat highlands west of Kamanjab; it becomes the Ombonde in its middle section where it is in places cut deeply into the silt deposits of prehistoric waterflows, creating river banks several metres in height; the river finally becomes the Hoanib from its passage through the Khowarib Gorge to the Atlantic; the Ombonde–Hoanib River gives the people’s landscape its name; Ombonde is the Otjiherero name for the camel thorn (the exact origin of the Khoekhoegowab word Hoanib could not be determined)
- **Klein Serengeti** – a large flat plain devoid of trees and fringed by rocky hills; named after the Serengeti Plains in east-central Africa (Serengeti is derived from Maasai and means endless plain); much of the substrate of the

plain consists of fine silt, which in the dry season becomes a dust bowl; yet in the rainy season the plain supports dense grasses that can grow over a metre in height; at the beginning of the rains, the first flush of green attracts springbok, zebra, gemsbok and ostrich, and elephant occasionally wander across the plains; locally called OrutjandjaraTjingambu

- **Beesvlaktes** – like the Klein Serengeti, the Beesvlaktes are created by silt deposits in a broad valley north of the Ombonde River; the fringes of the valley support stands of tall thorn trees, but the central plains are devoid of trees and become a dust bowl during the dry season; Beesvlakte is Afrikaans for cattle plain;
- **Palmfontein** – dense stands of picturesque makalani palms line a long stretch of permanent springs, fringed in places by stunning rock walls of the surrounding hills; the oasis attracts diverse birdlife and wildlife; Palmfontein is Afrikaans for palm spring
- **Palm River Valley** – long valley stretching the length of the Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area from south to north, created by the Palm River and its tributaries, which all flow into the Ombonde River
- **Elephant Rocks** – this is a particularly scenic area north of the Ombonde River, named after the elephant-shaped rocks that dominate the area
- **Ombonde Koppies** – a grouping of isolated hills towers above the southernmost Beesvlaktes, creating a stunning setting in the vast landscape; locally called OruhunguroHandukaze
- **Hidden Valley Way** – secluded in the rugged hills of the Khowarib Escarpment, a watercourse meanders through a long serpentine valley with several stunning ‘oxbow mini-valleys’, or ‘hidden valleys’, until it finally reaches the Khowarib Gorge
- **Ombahe Valley** – a large, broad valley fringed in all directions by rocky hills is veined by numerous ephemeral watercourses, interspersed by patches of open grassland; the watercourses support tall mopane and occasional leadwood trees, while the open grasslands are dotted with ringwood and shepherd’s trees; large numbers of giraffe are attracted to the area, and other game is also plentiful; Ombahe is the Herero name for giraffe
- **Ounguindi** – at the base of a rocky slope on the edge of an open plain, an attractive ephemeral pan ringed by mopane attracts diverse birdlife and wildlife; the temporary water source has been augmented by an artificial waterhole for wildlife
- **Collinson’s Pass** – the Khowarib Escarpment drops sharply down to an expansive valley, creating spectacular views fringed to the west by long lines of distant hills; the visitor track traverses a steep pass down the escarpment, named after conservation legend Roger Collinson; locally called Okomimunu
- **Etendeka Lavas** – the break-up of the supercontinent Gondwana around 130 million years ago created the coastline of Africa and thus Namibia; the spilt was accompanied by extensive volcanic activity, the remnants of which are still visible today as the vast Etendeka Lavas that stretch as a maroon stain across satellite views of northwestern Namibia
- **Rhino Springs** – a series of permanent springs in scenic basalt landscapes, collectively known as Rhino Springs, attract black rhino, elephant, lion, giraffe and other wildlife; such springs are a typical feature of the Etendeka Lavas



# 7 — WHO WANTS TO VISIT OMBONDE–HOANIB?



*Wilderness is not for everyone ... Ombonde–Hoanib's wild, rugged and inaccessible character will appeal to a particular market segment, which will also be influenced by the accommodation and infrastructure developments in the landscape*

*A group of ostriches contemplates the splendour of the rainy season*

## KEY POINTS

- Visitors are attracted to destinations by the perceived experiences these offer; this usually consists of a combination of features that include the physical setting, the style of accommodation, and the activities on offer
- Ombonde–Hoanib has the potential to offer a unique and highly attractive combination of these features
- Ombonde–Hoanib is currently not a known tourism destination and this must be developed
- To attract appropriate market segments to Ombonde–Hoanib, the product must be clearly defined, developed and marketed
- Accommodation options form an important aspect of destination choice, yet access challenges in Ombonde–Hoanib limit potential market segments here
- Ombonde–Hoanib is an inaccessible wilderness area that can only be traversed by visitors using four-wheel drive vehicles; this limits access to:

- **4x4 enthusiasts** (mostly camping travellers)
- **upmarket lodge visitors** receiving assisted access
- **special interest groups**

## THE OMBONDE–HOANIB EXPERIENCE

- The 'Ombonde–Hoanib Experience' should be defined through appropriate brand development, but should include aspects:
  - immersing in rugged Namibian wilderness
  - being enchanted by diverse landscapes and the changing faces of arid Namibia
  - glimpsing charismatic wildlife in stunning settings
  - being inspired by a unique conservation model in the form of a people's landscape

## POTENTIAL MARKETS

- For tourism-route purposes, current travel in Erongo–Kunene can be divided into three main categories:
  - **General-interest transit tours** using main

roads linking towns and a small number of key attractions in the area

- **General-interest exploration tours** using proclaimed roads linking smaller settlements and more diverse attractions
- **Four-by-four camping tours** using unproclaimed single-track routes linking specific sites of interest
- Limited access options for Ombonde–Hoanib confine markets to the following segments:
  - **4x4 enthusiasts** – these are generally self-reliant and mostly use camping facilities rather than upmarket lodges; the challenges created by self-drive 4x4 travellers include indiscriminate off-road driving to explore areas, littering and the destructive collection and use of firewood; this results in limited revenue generation with comparatively high impacts
  - **Upmarket lodge visitors** – only a portion of upmarket lodge visitors arrive in four-wheel-drive vehicles, which will limit guest numbers at lodges if self-drive access is the only option; options for assisted access to the area should be explored, including:
    - **fly-in visitors** – an airstrip was constructed as part of the development of Otjombonde Lodge; this could potentially also be used for guests of Palmfontein Lodge; the construction of another airstrip to service the northern half of Ombonde–Hoanib must be explored
    - **visitor transfers** – visitor transfers from designated pick-up points with safe parking may be possible to some sites, but the size and inaccessibility of Ombonde–Hoanib limits this option; the Palmfontein Vet Gate could be a potential safe-parking site
  - **Special interest groups** – special interest visitors are generally willing to accept more discomforts to reach their destination than general tourists; such groups include birders, geologists, archaeologists etc.; educational visits for school groups or other community sectors should also form a part of Ombonde–Hoanib’s target markets

## PHASED DEVELOPMENT

- No accommodation currently exists in Ombonde–Hoanib

- A phased approach to tourism development has been agreed to enable current use by self-drive visitors
- A selection of 4x4 routes can initially be offered without any other developments as part of the first phase of marketing Ombonde–Hoanib (enough accommodation options exist in the surrounding area to enable day trips though Ombonde–Hoanib along selected routes)
- As campsites and guiding services are established, route options for self-drive visitors can be expanded, but should remain limited
- Once lodges are operational in Ombonde–Hoanib, self-drive access and lodge game drives can be carefully zoned to minimise overlap

## POTENTIAL VISITOR NUMBERS

- The current global tourism climate makes attempts to estimate potential visitor numbers extremely difficult; the pandemic saw a massive drop in arrivals to Namibia; the year-on-year decline in airport arrivals between 2019 and 2020 was 97.8% from March to December<sup>1</sup>; an increase in tourist arrivals of 37.81% was recorded in 2021 compared to 2020, with a total of ±234,000 tourist arrivals<sup>2</sup>; the war in Ukraine is a renewed negative impact on global travel dynamics
- A brief desk-top survey of available visitor statistics was undertaken as a broad indicator of potential visitor numbers to Ombonde–Hoanib; the time constraints of this consultancy did not allow for more detailed or accurate statistics to be sourced or analysed
- The below statistics are incomplete and from different sources and years, and provide only a very broad indication of past and potential future visitor numbers

## SELECTED VISITOR STATISTICS:

- **Namibia:** 1,681,336 visitors in 2019<sup>3</sup>
- **Etosha:** ± 207,000 visitors in 2014
  - **Galton Gate:** ± 18,000 visitors in 2017<sup>4</sup>
- **Twyfelfontein:** ±51,000 visitors in 2013<sup>5</sup>
- **Skeleton Coast:** ± 5,500 visitors in 2019<sup>6</sup>
- **Palmfontein Gate:** >50 cars/month in 2022<sup>7</sup>



## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Namibia has seen a steady increase in visitor numbers since independence reaching 1,681,000 in 2019
- Etosha has seen a steady increase in visitor numbers since independence, estimated by park staff to have reached 300,000 per year prior to the pandemic<sup>8</sup>
- Etosha Galton Gate appears to be under-used due to inadequate promotion of the fact that it is open to the general public (see Note 4 below)
- There appears to have been a decline in visitor numbers to Twyfelfontein since an initial spike after its listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2007), down from ±58,000 in 2008 to ±51,000 in 2013
- No reliable data on recent visitor numbers to the Kaoko 4x4 Circuit could be sourced; a detailed study of visitor numbers to Kunene carried out in 1996 showed that at the time approximately 16% of visitors to accessible sites such as Twyfelfontein and Petrified Forest visited the Kaoko 4x4 Circuit<sup>9</sup>; this portion is believed to have increased significantly over the past 10 years
- Based on the 1996 study, there appears to have been a considerable decline in visitor numbers to Skeleton Coast between 1994 (±7,000 visitors through Ugabmond Gate) and 2019 (± 5,500 visitors in total)
- Ombonde–Hoanib may currently receive some 500 visitors a year travelling along the Tracks4Africa Otjitheka Trail; the impact of this traffic in terms of track erosion is already clear in some areas; track maintenance will be a priority as visitor numbers increase
- Considering the current global economic and political climate it is unclear how visitor dynamics will evolve in the future; it appears likely that more adventurous segments such as independent 4x4 travellers will recover relatively quickly; high-end tourism operators have also indicated a positive recovery rate after pandemic travel restrictions were lifted<sup>10</sup>
- **In general, visitor statistics to the broader area and particularly to Twyfelfontein and Etosha Galton Gate indicate that it would be**

**possible to draw several thousand visitors to Ombonde–Hoanib each year**

- **The accessibility and track conditions of Ombonde–Hoanib are the main limiting factor to visitor numbers**
- **If Ombonde–Hoanib is effectively promoted, managing visitor numbers is likely to be a bigger challenge than attracting enough visitors**

## NOTES:

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4. **Novelli, M. et al.** 2020. *MCC Namibia Tourism Project Evaluation: Final Report*. Millennium Challenge Corporation, Washington. The report notes that ‘Galton Gate has not been adequately promoted’, p. 22; no total visitor numbers for later years available, p. 36
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9. **Mumavindu, M. & Nekwiyu, W.** 1996. *Report on Tourism Data in Kunene Region*. Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Windhoek
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## 8 — PROPOSED ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENTS



*The development of stunning accommodation in spectacular settings is a key to tourism development and an important part of creating the sense of place of a destination*

*A chestnut weaver constructing its nest; colonies of these weavers are common in Ombonde–Hoanib during the rainy season*

### KEY POINTS

- The tourism development plan has identified 6 potential lodge sites in Ombonde–Hoanib, as well as 8 sites in the wider landscape; these are considered site options; not all should be developed as this would exceed carrying capacities
- Most areas that have been identified as prospective lodge locations are considered to hold development potential
- Identified lodge sites are considered to be preliminary and will depend on the vision of the chosen developer
- Care should be taken not to ‘close’ primary attractions by developing lodges in prominent locations at such attractions
- During preliminary site identifications for the tourism development plan, too much emphasis has been placed on prominent raised sites overlooking wildlife waterholes
- Ombonde–Hoanib accommodation developments should be nuanced and based on

enhancing the Ombonde–Hoanib sense of place by creating an ideal fit for a particular location in terms of ambience, visibility, accessibility etc.

### LOGE SITES IN OMBONDE–HOANIB

(More detail on most of the discussed sites is provided in the tourism development plan)

- **Palmfontein Site** – this is a very scenic site on a ridge overlooking the Palm River; it is considered the most immediately viable accommodation development site in Ombonde–Hoanib; water is available and reasonable access exists from the C40 at Erwee ( $\pm 7$  km to vet gate; 3–5 km from vet gate to site)
- **Otjombonde Lodge** – (also called Omatendeka or Otjomumbonde Lodge) the lodge was constructed in 2014 but never opened; an airstrip was constructed near the lodge and an MOU formulated for a service-access gate in the vet fence from the C40 ( $\pm 11$  km from C40 to fence;  $\pm 10$  km from fence to lodge); the current status is unclear, though general operational



requirements appear to be in place; priority should be given to getting the lodge operational as a matter of urgency (direct visitor access from the C40 is not considered necessary)

- **Ombonde Confluence Site** – this is a very scenic site on the southern bank of the Ombonde River at its confluence with the Otjovasandu River; accessibility to the site is a challenge, which could be solved by creating a track adjacent to and south of the Ombonde River from the existing Klein Khowarib track (accessed from Outokotorwa via Elephant Rocks); access along the Otjovasandu or Ombonde rivers should be restricted
- **Rhino Springs Site** – this is a very scenic wilderness area in basalt landscapes on the fringes of the Etendeka Lavas; an identified lodge site on a ridge overlooking a spring is considered inappropriate in this sensitive rhino area and wilderness setting; accommodation should instead consist of a small tented camp in a more secluded setting; a preliminary alternative site has been identified in a small mopane grove along a riverbed approximately 2 kilometres to the east; service access is a challenge and the camp should consist of a small, minimalistic operation focussing on rhino tracking and wilderness experiences

#### SITES IN THE NORTHERN BUFFER ZONE

- **Elephant Rocks** – this site should currently be considered for campsite development only (see Campsites, below)

#### SITES IN THE WESTERN BUFFER ZONE

- **Hidden Valley Site** – the Hidden Valley is an area of great scenic value within the Ombonde–Hoanib landscape; a watercourse meanders through a long serpentine valley with several stunning ‘oxbow mini-valleys’ until it reaches the Khowarib Gorge after ±15 km; a sensitive lodge development in one of the side valleys would not lessen the overall attraction of the Hidden Valley and could become one of the iconic lodges of Ombonde–Hoanib; water supply may be a challenge
- **Khowarib Lodge** – this lodge falls outside the current development focus area but should over time be incorporated into the ‘Ombonde–

Hoanib Brand’ through suitable support

- **Khowarib East** – potential exists for another lodge development at the eastern end of the Khowarib Gorge; the location is very scenic

#### SITES CONSIDERED INAPPROPRIATE

The following sites identified in the tourism development plan are considered inappropriate for immediate development; some of these areas represent significant landscape attractions that might be impacted negatively by a lodge development

- **Klein Serengeti** – this is an important landscape attraction in Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Klein Khowarib** – this is an important landscape attraction in Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Ounguindi Hunting Camp** – this hunting camp has been closed, although some infrastructure remains in place; the site is located directly along the most-used visitor route and is not considered appropriate for an accommodation development; an artificial waterhole exists at the site that should be developed for wildlife viewing
- **Khowarib (middle section)** – three lodges in the Khowarib Gorge are considered beyond the current high-end lodge demand for the area

#### SITES OUTSIDE THE FOCUS AREA

The following sites identified in the tourism development plan fall outside the focus area of this consultancy and have not been assessed:

- **Ehi-Rovipuka Hunting Camp**
- **Anabeb West**
- **Ondendati (Omatendeka)**

#### CAMPSITES

The following campsite options have been identified; these are discussed in detail in Section 9. Potential for eco-entrepreneurs, pp. 24–25

##### OMBONDE–HOANIB

- **Palmfontein**

##### NORTHERN BUFFER ZONE

- **Kamdescha**
- **Elephant Rocks**
- **Ombonde Koppies**

##### WESTERN BUFFER ZONE

- **Mbakondja Campsite**
- **Khowarib Campsite**

## 9\_\_ POTENTIAL FOR ECO-ENTREPRENEURS



*Eco-entrepreneur potential can be optimised by creating suitable products in suitable locations at the right time*

*A newly developed shop is located along the C43 at the Otjizeka access track to Ombonde–Hoanib*

### KEY POINTS

- The success of developing/supporting/promoting eco-enterprises is closely linked to a number of factors, including:
  - available markets
  - market-oriented products
  - suitable location
  - sense of safety, authenticity & trustworthiness
- Visitor traffic through the Ombonde–Hoanib landscape is currently limited
- Eco-enterprise development/support/promotion should be directly linked to the growth in visitor numbers over time
- Eco-enterprise potential is grouped into three time frames with appropriate enterprises
  - **Immediate**
    - Info-shops
    - Campsites
  - **Short term** (1– 3 years)
    - Guiding services
    - Craft sales
  - **Mid-term** (3–5 years)
    - Cultural sites
    - Auxiliary services, e.g. vegetable gardening to supply lodges

### ENTERPRISE CATEGORIES

- **Info-shops** should be simple but multi-functional; they should retain the unique flair of rural Namibian enterprises, but through carefully guided development should exude a sense of safety, authenticity & trustworthiness; through the use of appropriate signage, the info-shops should be immediately recognisable as being part of the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Brand’ (see also Section 12. Immediate Needs: Branding, p. 30)

*As a starting point info-shops should:*

- provide basic information on the Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape, community conservation, local cultures and livelihoods through simple, all-weather information displays outside the shop
- sell refrigerated softdrinks, snacks, maps of Ombonde–Hoanib and ‘Friends of Ombonde–Hoanib’ products

*As Ombonde–Hoanib developments evolve, the info-shops could also:*

- serve as entry points for step-on guiding services



- be sales points for high-quality local crafts
- provide other services such as tyre repairs
- **Campsites** should provide basic amenities such as shade, fireplaces, showers and flush toilets; through the use of appropriate signage and other features, the campsites should be immediately recognisable as being part of the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Brand’ (see also Section 12. Immediate Needs: Branding, p. 30)
- **Guiding services** must be of the highest standards to avoid creating negative impressions of the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Experience’; this requires a rigorous training programme to ensure suitable knowledge and presentation skills; the constant availability of guides presents some typical challenges, which can be addressed during the development of this eco-enterprise option (see also Section 11. Relevant challenges: guiding standards, p. 29); pick-up points for the guides should be linked to entrance points/info-shops

## IDENTIFIED ENTERPRISE SITES

### INFO-SHOPS

- **Otjizeka Entrance** – this high-visibility location along the C43 is seen as the primary site for the development of an Ombonde–Hoanib Info-Shop; the building to house a small shop was recently erected at this site and can be developed into an info-shop
- **Kamdescha Entrance** – a small shop already exists at this site and can be transformed into an info-shop
- **Palmfontein Entrance** – a small shop existed at this site in the past, but was closed as part of relocating people out of the area to establish Ombonde–Hoanib; this enterprise can be re-established at the site
- **Khowarib/Ombaitji** – Khowarib and Ombaitji are important locations regarding visitor access into the Ombonde–Hoanib area; both sites have some existing facilities; the current status of these is unclear, but the potential exists to transform existing enterprises into Ombonde–Hoanib Info-Shops, or alternatively develop new info-shops

### CAMPSESITES

- **Kamdescha Campsite** – a suitable site has been identified on the southern bank of the Otjovasandu River just west of the Kamdescha Vet Gate in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy; the campsite can serve as an important start/end point for visitors to Ombonde–Hoanib via Kamdescha
- **Palmfontein Campsite** – a suitable site has been identified on the northern bank of the Palmfontein River just west of the Palmfontein Vet Gate in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy; the campsite can serve as an important start/end point for visitors to Ombonde–Hoanib via Palmfontein
- **Elephant Rocks** – a potential location has been identified in this highly-scenic area of the Northern Buffer Zone in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy; a borehole that could supply water exists less than 2 km to the north
- **Ombonde Koppies** – a potential location has been identified in this highly-scenic area of the Northern Buffer Zone in Omatendeka Conservancy; while the site is relatively close to Elephant Rocks, it is located along a different access route that is considered important in terms of overall routing; if well-developed, the two campsites could become iconic wilderness campsites in the Northern Buffer Zone
- **Mbakondja Campsite** – this is an existing campsite in an ideal location close to and just west of the C43 and close to the Otjizeka Entrance to Ombonde–Hoanib; the current status of the site is unclear, but it should be possible to reactivate the site, rather than creating a new site at the Otjizeka Entrance
- **Khowarib Campsite** – this existing campsite falls outside the current development focus area but should over time be incorporated into the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Brand’ through suitable support

### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- No campsites are recommended within the Ombonde–Hoanib Core Area, which should be reserved for a small number of high-end lodge developments



# 10\_\_ OMBONDE- HOANIB TOURISM ROUTE DEVELOPMENT



*Visitor routes provide access to destinations and attractions; in a wilderness area, they play an important role in defining the visitor experience*

*A typical dry riverbed crossing in Ombonde–Hoanib*

## KEY POINTS

- Preliminary tourism route development in Ombonde–Hoanib forms the core output of this consultancy
- Detailed route maps and interpretive materials form the separate Deliverable 2 of this consultancy and are not included in this report
- Routes are described here to provide a summary of existing and newly identified routes
- The summary places the routes in the context of the recommendations of the tourism development plan, the draft management plan and this assessment
- A number of Tracks4Africa routes traverse Ombonde–Hoanib and the wider landscape, these can be allowed to continue unchanged until developments in Ombonde–Hoanib are at a more advanced stage, particularly in terms of access control
- All routes must be considered preliminary due to the currently unresolved status of various aspects that influence the use of the routes

## EXISTING TRACK INFRASTRUCTURE

- No proclaimed or systematically maintained roads exist in Ombonde–Hoanib
- Most tracks have been created by resident communities to connect settlements or access stock posts or other resources
- All tracks are single-vehicle tracks that receive no coordinated maintenance, but are maintained through active use
- When a section of track becomes impassible, a detour around the obstacle is usually created
- Erosion of tracks is of great concern
- During the rainy season large parts of Ombonde–Hoanib may become inaccessible
- All tracks require 4x4
- With the exception of short stretches where speeds of up to 40 km/h may be achieved, most driving in Ombonde–Hoanib is below 20 km/h
- Average distances covered per hour vary between 10 and 20 kilometres
- Only existing tracks have been considered as part of the current route identification exercise



## CURRENTLY MAPPED/USED ROUTES

### TRACKS4AFRICA

- **Otjitheka Trail** – from the C40 at Erwee via Palmfontein northwest across Ombonde–Hoanib to the southern fringes of the Klein Serengeti valley and via Collinson’s Pass to the C43
- **Klein Serengeti Trail** – from the Ombonde River across the Klein Serengeti to the Otjitheka Trail
- **Khowarib Trail** – from the Kamdescha Vet Gate along the Otjivasandu River to the Ombonde River and along the Ombonde River to Ombaikiha  
*This trail should be discontinued*
- **Khowarib Schlucht Trail** – from Ombaikiha to Khowarib through the Khowarib Gorge
- **Beesvlakte Trail** – from Omuramba across the Beesvlaktes to Ombaikiha
- **Otjisakumuka Trail** – from the C35 at Otjokovare via the D3721 (single 4x4 track) to Omuramba

## RECOMMENDED OMBONDE–HOANIB ROUTES

The following routes are recommended for current self-drive use in Ombonde–Hoanib and the buffer zones; all routes can be driven in reverse (routes from the Otjizeka Entrance should use the southern track avoiding Collinson’s Pass):

- **C40–Palmfontein–Klein Serengeti South–Otjizeka–Collinson’s Pass–C43** – this is considered the premier self-drive route to currently traverse Ombonde–Hoanib; the route is very similar to the Tracks4Afrika Otjitheka Trail, but uses a northern loop west of Palmfontein that bi-passes the access route to the Otjombonde Lodge
- **Outokotorwa–Elephant Rocks–Klein Khowarib–Palmfontein–C40** – this route traverses the eastern sector of Ombonde–Hoanib and passes through the spectacular Klein Khowarib gorge
- **Outokotorwa–Ombonde Koppies–Ombonde River–Klein Khowarib–Palmfontein–C40** – this route includes a section of the Ombonde River while traversing the eastern sector of Ombonde
- **Outokotorwa–Ombonde Koppies–Klein Serengeti–Otjizeka–Collinson’s Pass–C43**

– this route traverses the western sector of Ombonde–Hoanib and passes across the spectacular Klein Serengeti and Collinson’s Pass

- **Outokotorwa–Elephant Rocks–Ombonde River–Klein Serengeti–Otjizeka–Collinson’s Pass–C43** – this route includes a section of the Ombonde River while traversing the western sector of Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Kamdescha–Arizona–Outokotorwa–Ombaikiha–Khowarib** – this route delineates the Northern Buffer Zone and enables visitors to the area to traverse the Khowarib Gorge while avoiding driving along the entire length of the Ombonde River
- **Kamdescha–Arizona–Outokotorwa–Elephant Rocks–Ombonde River–Ombonde Koppies–Ombaikiha–Khowarib** – this route includes a section of the Ombonde River as a detour to the Kamdescha–Khowarib route

## NOTES ON SPECIFIC ROUTE SECTIONS

- **Ombonde River Section** – a section of ±12 km along the Ombonde River between the Klein Serengeti exit and the Klein Khowarib exit enables an Ombonde River experience while keeping the remainder of the Ombonde River free of regular vehicle traffic; this section can be driven as part of a number of route combinations
- **Khowarib Gorge** – this iconic route between Khowarib and Ombaikiha should remain open to self-drive visitors during the dry season
- **Four Palms** – the area around the site Four Palms (i.e. the southern bank of the Ombonde River between the Klein Serengeti and Klein Khowarib exits) is being degraded by extreme sheet erosion along the river; all unnecessary vehicle traffic across this area should be avoided to slow the erosion; tracks used by the community exist, but the community should be sensitised to the issue to help slow the degradation

## OTHER EXISTING ROUTES

The following routes have been mapped in Ombonde–Hoanib, but are not recommended for current use by self-drive visitors and thus should not form part of current route developments:

- **Palmfontein–Palm River Valley–Turquoise Hills–Klein Serengeti South** – this is a highly attractive route traversing central Ombonde–Hoanib from Palmfontein to the Klein Serengeti
- **Klein Serengeti–Khowarib Escarpment–C43** – this scenic route from the Klein Serengeti passes through the Khowarib Escarpment to the north of Otjizeka and Collinson’s Pass, and joins the Otjizeka–C43 track near the main road
- **Hidden Valley Way** – this very scenic route follows the Hidden Valley to near its confluence with the Khowarib Gorge
- **Rhino Springs Loop** – this route in the inaccessible southwest of Ombonde–Hoanib traverses sensitive rhino range and should not be open to general self-drive access
- **Klein Serengeti East/West** – two routes cross the Klein Serengeti, both are equally scenic; the western route may become boggy and impassible along the northern fringes of the plain and this route may also cause more disturbance to wildlife on the open plain
- **Kamdescha–Otjovasandu River–Ombonde River Confluence** – this is an attractive route following the course of the Otjovasandu River to its confluence with the Ombonde River; long stretches of riverbed driving are considered ecologically undesirable and this route should be reserved for occasional special-interest groups
- **Klein Khowarib–Palmfontein (eastern foothills route)** – this route runs along an old bulldozed cutline adjacent to the western Klein Khowarib–Palmfontein Route; it should only be used for landscape management purposes
- **Otjombonde Lodge Loop** – this access loop to the Otjombonde Lodge should be reserved for lodge use
- **C35 (tar)** – the route connects Kamanjab–Etosha Galton Gate–Hobatere–Otjokovare–Opuwo/Ruacana/Outapi; the route is an important link between Ombonde–Hoanib and Etosha National Park, Hobatere Tourism Concession and northeastern the Kunene Region; access to Ombode is possible via Kamdescha Vet Gate or a number of tracks that reach the Ombaikiha–Outokotorwa–Kamdescha Track from the northeast
- **C40 (gravel)** – the route connects Kamanjab–Erwee–Palmwag; the route is an important link between Ombonde–Hoanib and Etosha National Park and central Namibia; access to Ombode–Hoanib is possible via Palmfontein Vet Gate
- **C43 (gravel)** – the route connects Palmwag–Khowarib–Warmquelle–Opuwo/Sesfontein; the route is the main tourism thoroughfare into the northwestern Kunene Region; access to Ombode–Hoanib is possible via the Otjizeka and Khowarib tracks
- **D3710 (gravel)** – the route connects Warmquelle–Omuramba–Opuwo; the route provides important northern access options for Ombonde–Hoanib; access to Ombode–Hoanib is possible via various Beesvlaktes tracks; the section of the D3710 passing through the Khowarib Escarpment is currently in very poor condition
- **D3721 (single track 4x4)** – the route connects Otjokovare–Omuramba; the route creates an important link between the C35 and the D3710; no direct access is possible to Ombonde–Hoanib; the route consists of a single track and requires 4x4 in places

*All of these routes should be kept closed to self-drive traffic until more active control over visitor movements can be maintained*

## ROUTES IN THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

The following main tourism thoroughfares in the wider landscape are important for channelling visitor traffic to Ombonde–Hoanib (see also Section 4. Ombonde–Hoanib’s location within the wider tourism landscape, pp. 12–13):



# 11 — RELEVANT CHALLENGES



*Effective maintenance of access and tourism routes in and around Ombonde–Hoanib represents a significant challenge for the landscape*

*A washed-away section of the D3710 highlights that even proclaimed and maintained gravel roads face significant challenges*

## KEY POINTS

A number of challenges directly relevant to tourism route development in Ombonde–Hoanib have been identified; these are summarised as follows:

- **Track maintenance** – 4x4 tracks deteriorate from constant use, and may become extremely eroded or washed away during the rainy season
- **Service logistics for accommodation sites** – long distances along rough access tracks to sites make service logistics challenging
- **Guiding standards** – well-trained guides are a prerequisite for step-on guiding services; good guides quickly find permanent employment with private operators, creating high turn-over; a system of utilising conservancy game guards on a rotational basis may be an option
- **Viability of eco-enterprises** – enterprise success is ultimately defined by the quality of the offered products and services, but requires significant staying power during a period of establishment and growth in visitor volumes; this must be carefully considered during the selection of enterprises
- **Seasonality** – flooded rivers and eroded/overgrown tracks make parts of Ombonde–Hoanib inaccessible for short periods during the rainy season; alternatively, extreme heat during summer poses a challenge for visitor activities
- **Erosion** – widespread sheet erosion, particularly in the vicinity of the Ombonde River, is an issue of great environmental concern
- **Settlement** – while the management plan states that there will be no residents in the core landscape, settlements are present at a number of sites; a well-maintained cemetery at Palmfontein is an important community site to which community access must remain possible
- **Livestock** – livestock continues to be present at a number of sites in Ombonde–Hoanib, even at the height of an excellent rainy season when grazing is available outside the core landscape
- **Human-wildlife conflict** – mitigation of conflicts, particularly between predators and livestock, creates significant conservation and related tourism-product challenges
- **Mining** – small-scale mining takes place in Ombonde–Hoanib (Turquoise Hills area) and must be carefully managed to mitigate impacts

## 12\_\_ IMMEDIATE NEEDS



*To optimise the potential of Ombonde–Hoanib, a holistic development approach and a focus on priority needs is important*

*The Herero sesame-bush is a prominent feature on some Ombonde–Hoanib hillsides*

### KEY POINTS

The successful development of tourism routes in Ombonde–Hoanib must be accompanied by holistic development of other components; the following immediate needs have been identified:

- **Branding** – the creation of a strong ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Brand’ that produces a clear identity by defining the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Experience’ and the ‘Ombonde–Hoanib Vision’, as well as other identity elements, is an important first step in attracting visitors to the area; visitors travel to a destination for a perceived experience that is created by a particular notion of being in that destination – a ‘sense of place’; this is created only in part by the physical features of the destination and must be enhanced (‘built’) through a combination of branding and marketing
- **Marketing** – branding and marketing are different, though interrelated processes; once a strong Ombonde–Hoanib Brand has been created, this must be advertised to potential markets through effective marketing initiatives
- **Signage** – clear signs at access points to Ombonde–Hoanib are a priority to orient visitors and create an initial sense of arrival; additional signs at key points to indicate closed tracks or riverbed sections would facilitate control over visitor movements; all signage should be in a style that complements the overall Ombonde–Hoanib Brand
- **Route maps** – until the envisaged systems of digital navigation can be implemented, printed maps depicting the overall Ombonde–Hoanib landscape and clearly indicating visitor routes are a vital aspect of kick-starting visitor flows to Ombonde–Hoanib, as well as controlling visitor movements within the landscape
- **Track maintenance** – the condition of tracks in Ombonde–Hoanib is a significant challenge and an immediate interim system of maintaining visitor routes in an appropriate condition is considered a priority



# 13\_\_ FIELD TRIP NOTES



*Field work in a wilderness area includes a variety of challenges that must be overcome – especially during a good rainy season*

*Freeing a vehicle from a bog on the Klein Serengeti is muddy work*

## KEY POINTS

- The consultant spent 11 days in the field between 15 and 25 March
- Roger Collinson (IRDNC) and his assistant Katipo Ngunaihe accompanied the consultant from 15 to 17 March
- Kahikaeta Thom (Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy) accompanied the group for the morning of 15 March to point out a potential campsite development in Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy
- An arrangement for additional local guiding services by Asser Ujaha (Ehi-Rovipuka Conservancy) could not be met, as Mr Ujaha was only available from 24 March
- Mr Collinson liaised with all conservancies regarding the project and the field visit
- The rhino rangers at Rhino Springs were visited, they accompanied the consultant for part of the morning of 20 March
- A courtesy visit was paid to the Omatendeka Conservancy office on 25 March
- All tracks driven or walked by the consultant were mapped by GPS
- Heavy rain prior to and during the field trip resulted in many tracks being in extremely poor condition and in a number of cases impassible due to flooding, erosion or dense grass cover that obliterated the tracks
- Progress along tracks was extremely slow, resulting in much less of the area being covered than initially expected
- Previously identified tourism sites were visited and assessed where possible
- A good overview of existing tracks and potential tourism routes was gained despite the obstacles encountered
- Sufficient material could be gathered to complete the consultancy without the need for an additional field trip
- All sightings of larger wildlife and related spoor were recorded
- Sightings of birds were recorded as time permitted
- Dominant tree species and other conspicuous flora were recorded
- Other conspicuous biodiversity was recorded
- Dominant geomorphological features were recorded
- Photos of key aspects were taken as time permitted

# 14\_\_ CONSERVANCY INPUT MEETING



*Ombonde–Hoanib is a community vision for large-landscape conservation that benefits the environment, landscape residents and visitor experiences*

*View of Ombonde–Hoanib from Ombonde Koppies, locally known as Oruhungu-roHandukaze*

## KEY POINTS

- On 18 May the consultant presented the findings of this report to representatives of the Ehi-Rovipoka, Omatendeka, Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies at the Opuwo Country Lodge, Opuwo
- 46 representatives of the conservancies were present at the meeting
- Roger Collinson (IRDNC) provided an introduction to the presentation and gave a brief overview of the project
- Fiina Amukwa (GIZ) gave a brief presentation outlining eco-entrepreneur identification and support options for the landscape
- Participation at the meeting and general responses to the presentation of the consultant were extremely positive
- The representatives expressed sincere gratitude for the initiative to assess tourism potential and undertake visitor route development in the landscape
- The expressed consensus was that the presented materials are exactly what is needed to kick-start tourism development in the landscape

## POINTS RAISED BY REPRESENTATIVES

The following points were raised by participants at the meeting:

- **Clarity was requested on livestock herding and settlement in the people's landscape**
  - the consultant emphasised that a people's landscape is not a national park that excludes people or livestock, but rather that a balance between livelihood activities and conservation should be achieved
    - livestock herding must be well managed
    - livestock must not displace wildlife
    - retaliatory or pre-emptive killings of predators must be avoided
- Roger Collinson emphasised the need for clearly zoned core wildlife areas, which has always been part of conservancy development
  - part of the motivation to develop a people's landscape is that a registered people's landscape has the powers to enforce such zonation, which a conservancy does not
- participants agreed that settlement and livestock in the landscape should be guided by the draft management plan



- **Clarity was requested regarding gates at access points**
  - the consultant pointed out that no gates are currently envisaged, but that manned access gates where visitors are charged entry fees could be part of future developments if the landscape is formally registered as a protected area
    - the current initiative merely defines access routes for visitors to control tourism traffic
    - resident movement in the landscape as part of normal livelihood activities is currently not restricted in any way
- **The challenge of controlling mining in the area was pointed out**
  - it was stated that about 200 mine workers are currently living/working in the area of the mine east of Klein Serengeti
  - it was stated that the mining was only carried out on a seasonal basis
- **The overall landscape development approach was discussed**
  - since the completion of the field work and draft materials for this consultancy, Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies have expressed a firm commitment to allocating portions of their areas to the people's landscape
  - representatives stressed that the current initiative for Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib (production of guidemaps, development of eco-enterprises) should not be delayed to wait for the inclusion of Anebeb and Sesfontein (or other conservancies)
  - Anabeb and Sesfontein representatives requested that a similar initiative of assessing tourism potential, defining visitor routes and creating route information materials should be carried out for these two conservancies as a matter of priority
  - a warning was expressed that the overall Ombonde–Hoanib initiative should not revert to the concept of a Kunene People's Park embracing a large number of conservancies and managed by government rather than the conservancies themselves
  - it was requested that any materials developed for Ombonde–Hoanib, such as apps, online or printed materials, should be made accessible to the participating conservancies
- it was requested that each conservancy receive 5 printed copies of this report prior to broader publication/distribution
- **Place names and spelling**
  - representatives checked the spelling of place names used in the materials and provided corrections and local names where needed
- **Working definition of people's landscape**
  - representatives endorsed the working definitions of a people's landscape as used in this report and the draft visitor route guidemap for Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib
- **Additional sites**
  - the following additional site of interest was pointed out in Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib:
    - Otjituotjombo Koppie (small spring; old camp); located in currently ungazetted area in south of Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib, close to vet fence
    - sites in Western Ombonde–Hoanib, west of the C43, are equally important and should be covered in a future assessment

# 15\_\_ ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



*Overgrazing, particularly by large herds of goats, is degrading parts of the larger landscape and represents an additional challenge related to livestock herding*

*At the end of an excellent rainy season, the vicinity of the Ombaikiha settlement has been grazed to bare ground, and mopane trees have been browsed to bare stumps by a massive overstocking of goats*

## KEY POINTS

- As an extension to the trip to Opuwo to attend the conservancy input meeting, the consultant visited parts of Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib for 2 nights/3 days between 19 and 21 May (independent of GIZ funding) to map parts of the landscape not covered by the original field trip and verify aspects raised during the conservancy input meeting
- Feedback from the conservancy input meeting and findings from the verification field trip have led to the following additional recommendations

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ombonde–Hoanib Vision Document**
  - there is an urgent need to formulate a very concise vision document for the people's landscape (this should be no more than 2 A4 pages in length)
  - the document should clearly define the vision for the landscape under the main objectives:
    - landscape and biodiversity conservation
    - rare-species protection
    - tangible community returns
    - valuable visitor experiences

- the following key aspects should be clarified in the document:
  - conservation priorities (including rare-species protection)
  - community priorities (including eco-enterprises, overall tourism benefits, settlement, livestock herding, other livelihood activities)
  - tourism priorities (including upmarket tourism needs)
  - mining controls and other pertinent challenges

- **Ensuring cohesive landscape development**
  - it was announced at the conservancy input meeting that Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancies had reached community agreement to become part of one overall Ombonde–Hoanib People's Landscape
  - while the assessment of tourism potential, route identification and visitor information-material development for the western conservancies must be conducted as a separate initiative, it is considered vital to indicate cohesiveness of the entire landscape



as part of all forthcoming interventions

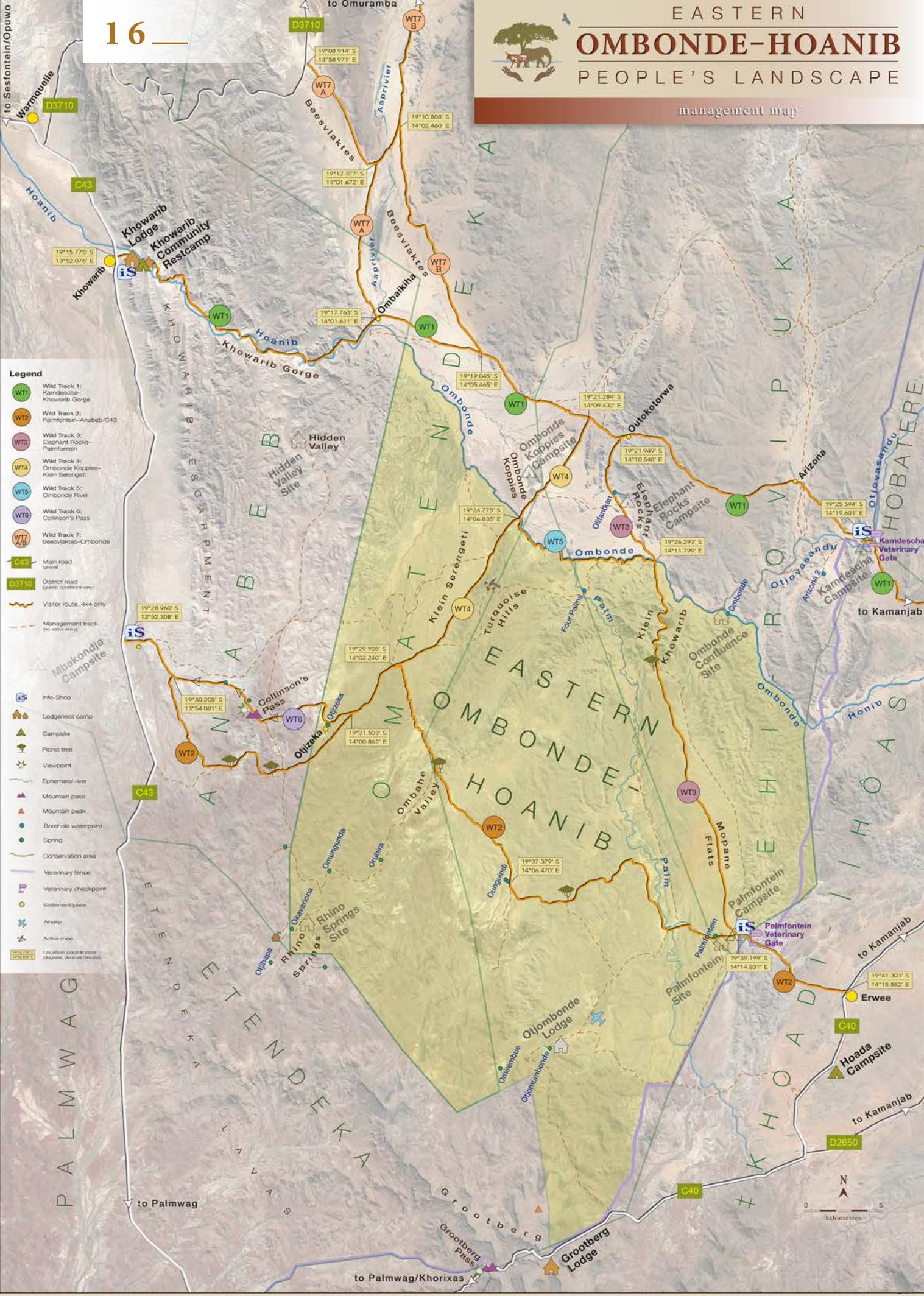
- it is recommended that the Ehi-Rovipuka and Omatendeka portion of the landscape be referred to as Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape on materials being currently developed, to indicate that this is only a part of a larger area
  - the Anabeb and Sesfontein portion of the landscape should be referred to as the Western Ombonde–Hoanib People’s Landscape
  - as the C43 road bisects the overall landscape into two parts, the use of eastern and western is also logical from a visitor and general development perspective; the C43 should represent the demarcation between eastern and western
  - for overarching materials developed in the future, the name Ombonde–Hoanib People’s landscape should be used
- **Ensuring eco-enterprise sustainability**
    - the development of local enterprises targeting the tourism market is historically difficult, as community understanding and expectations tend to diverge significantly from market needs; the Erongo–Kunene Community Conservation Area is littered with numerous remnants of enterprises that have failed
    - in order to strive for sustainability of the eco-enterprises being targeted for support in Ombonde–Hoanib, two aspects are important above and beyond the currently envisaged support framework:
      - enterprise development must be closely linked to an overall Ombonde–Hoanib vision and brand (which have not yet been defined/developed)
      - support that ensures market-oriented product development is more important than practical funding of infrastructure or equipment (market-oriented product development goes far beyond standard business-skills training)
    - it is recommended that the development of both campsites and info-shops be linked to the development of upmarket lodges

in Ombonde–Hoanib as part of a longer-term mentorship programme (community development support is a standard part of joint-venture and conservation-hunting contracts and clear mentorship requirements can be stipulated as part of contracts for Ombonde–Hoanib)

- **Managing current settlement/livestock**
  - a rapid increase in settlement and livestock herding is taking place in the areas of Four Palms, the central Palm River Valley (‘Colin’s Borehole’) and Palmfontein
  - significant livestock numbers have been moved into all of these areas after the recent good rains
  - there is a significant danger of these areas being rapidly degraded by large herds of goats
  - the situation must receive urgent attention to avoid damage to sensitive areas, particularly Palmfontein, which is a key site attraction in Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib
  - the Ombaikiha area on the northern boundary of Eastern Ombonde–Hoanib has already been badly degraded, which has significantly reduced the potential of this site for the development of an info-shop or visitor accommodation
- **Balancing community, conservation and tourism needs**
  - developing a conservation area across four adjoining conservancies (bisected by a public road) requires a pragmatic approach that balances community, conservation and tourism needs
  - fear of loss of grazing or other land uses is one of the biggest barriers to broad community support for such an initiative
  - it must be continually emphasised to communities that a people’s landscape seeks a healthy balance of land uses, rather than excluding people or land uses
  - all land uses, including conservation and tourism, must be well-managed for such an initiative to be successful
    - core wildlife areas are vital within the landscape

- the landscape must embrace multiple-use areas in which settlement, livestock herding and cropping are possible
- core wildlife areas must be connected via wildlife movement corridors
- human–wildlife conflict must be carefully managed and mitigated
- tourism products must emphasise the attractiveness of a people’s landscape in which land uses are balanced, rather than only focussing on wildlife and wilderness





- Legend**
- WT1 Wild Track 1: Kamdescha-Khowarib Gorge
  - WT2 Wild Track 2: Palmfontein-Anaabe/C43
  - WT3 Wild Track 3: Elephant Rocks-Palmfontein
  - WT4 Wild Track 4: Ombonde Koppies-Klein Serengeti
  - WT5 Wild Track 5: Ombonde River
  - WT6 Wild Track 6: Collinson's Pass
  - WT7 Wild Track 7: Beesvliaktes-Ombonde
  - C43 Main road
  - D3710 District road
  - Visitor route, 4x4 only
  - Management track (no visitor entry)
  - iS Info-Shop
  - 🏠 Lodge/rest camp
  - 🌲 Campsite
  - 🌳 Picnic tree
  - 🗿 Viewpoint
  - 🌊 Ephemeral river
  - ⚡ Mountain pass
  - ⚡ Mountain peak
  - 💧 Borehole/waterpoint
  - 💧 Spring
  - Conservation area
  - Veterinary fence
  - Veterinary checkpoint
  - 🏠 Settlement/place
  - 🚶 Airstrip
  - 🚶 Access trail
  - 📍 Location coordinates (shape, decimal degrees)



