



# Northern Cape

## Includes ➔

Kimberley .....	439
Upington .....	449
Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park ...	451
Augrabies Falls National Park .....	454
Springbok .....	456
Calvinia .....	461

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Kalahari Tented Camp (p453)
- ➔ 75 on Milner (p443)
- ➔ Kimberley Club (p443)
- ➔ Le Must River Residence (p449)
- ➔ Tatasberg Wilderness Camp (p459)

## Best Places off the Beaten Track

- ➔ Witsand Nature Reserve (p448)
- ➔ Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre (p445)
- ➔ Tankwa Karoo National Park (p460)
- ➔ Wonderwerk Cave (p448)
- ➔ Kokerboom Food & Wine Route (p454)

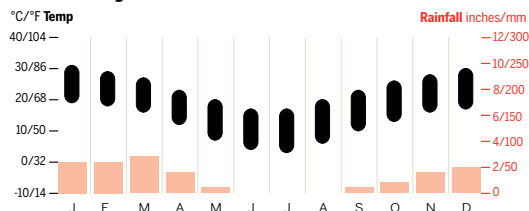
## Why Go?

With just a million people inhabiting its 373,000 sq km, the Northern Cape is South Africa's last great frontier. Its scattered towns are hundreds of kilometres apart, connected by empty roads across the wildernesses of Namakwa, the Kalahari and Upper Karoo. In these sublime, surreal expanses, reality disappears faster than a meerkat into its burrow. Under the remorseless sun, vehicles share park roads with lions, dune boards swish down roaring sands, and Kimberley's pubs have been serving since the 19th-century diamond rush.

It's a raw, elemental land, where gnarly camel-thorn, quiver and Halfmens trees break the boundless horizons. Yet some of nature's greatest tricks here are instances of rejuvenating beauty. The Gariep (Orange) River waters the dry region, creating the Green Kalahari with its vineyards and epic Augrabies Falls. Following the rains, red Kalahari sands shimmer with grasses, and Namakwa's spring blooming carpets rocky hills and plains with wildflowers.

## When to Go

### Kimberley



**Jan-Mar** Augrabies Falls most impressive; weather scorching but Kgalagadi wildlife-watching excellent.

**May-Jul** Winter is cooler, night skies are brighter and dry conditions bring animals to waterholes.

**Aug-Sep** Namakwa's barren expanses explode with colour during the spring wild-flower bloom.

## Language & People

English is widely spoken in the Northern Cape but Afrikaans is the dominant language, with about 54% of the province speaking it. Tswana (33%) and Xhosa (6%) are the other main languages. The population includes Afrikaners, Tswana and descendants of the region's earliest inhabitants, the Khoe-San, who can still be seen around the Kalahari.

## KIMBERLEY

POP 97,000

Kimberley, the provincial capital, is the centre of the region known as the Diamond Fields. The city that gave birth to De Beers and 'a diamond is forever' remains a captivating place, with a Wild West vibe.

Whether you are drinking in raucous saloons dating back to the diamond rush, surveying the world's largest hand-dug hole, or taking a ghost tour and learning about the folk who lived, mined and died here, Kimberley is an excellent place to get stuck into South Africa's eventful history.

The last earth was shovelled at the landmark Big Hole back in 1914, but the Northern Cape's capital remains synonymous with diamonds. Step inside an atmospheric old pub, with dark interiors, scarred wooden tables and last century's liquor ads, and you'll feel you've been transported back to Kimberley's rough-and-ready mining heyday. Wander the period-perfect Victorian mining settlement at the Big Hole Complex, and you'll leave imagining Cecil Rhodes is alive and well and pointing his horse towards Rhodesia.

The Northern Cape's only real city is also home to fantastic museums, some wonderful accommodation and Galeshewe, a township with plenty of its own history.

## Sights

### ★ Big Hole

MUSEUM

(☎053-830 4417; [www.thebighole.co.za](http://www.thebighole.co.za); West Circular Rd; adult/child R90/50; ☉8am-5pm, tours on the hour) Although the R50 million that turned the Big Hole into a world-class tourist destination came from De Beers, touring the world's largest hand-dug hole gives an honest impression of the mining industry's chequered past in Kimberley. Visits start with a 20-minute film about mining conditions and characters in late-19th-century Kimberley, and a walk along the Big Hole viewing platform. The open-air steel contraption, jutting

## ARCHITECTURE

Thanks to its fascinating history, Kimberley holds a lot for the architecture enthusiast. Check out **Rudd House** (☎053-839 2722; 5 Loch Rd; adult/child R25/12; ☎by appointment), a fine example of the residences constructed for rich Kimberlites in the 19th century, and **Dunluce** (☎053-839 2722; 10 Lodge Rd; adult/child R25/12; ☎by appointment), an elaborate Victorian residence.

For something more modern, head to the striking **Northern Cape Legislature Building** (☎053-839 8024; [www.ncpleg.gov.za](http://www.ncpleg.gov.za); off Green St, Galeshewe; ☉8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to noon Fri) **FREE** in Galeshewe, designed to reflect the culture, nature and history of Kimberley and the Northern Cape. The building is signposted from the city centre, but it is best visited on a guided Galeshewe tour.

over the 1.6km-round, 215m-deep chasm, enhances the vertigo-inducing view of the 40m-deep turquoise water.

A lift takes you down a shaft for the simulated mine experience, where audio and visual effects give an idea of how bad life was for the early diamond miners. Sounds of tumbling rubble and explosions add to the claustrophobia.

After exiting the mine, spend some time in the exhibition centre, which covers South African history and diamonds in general, as well as Kimberley's story. Also here is the guarded diamond vault, holding more than 3500 diamonds and replicas of the Eureka and 616 (the world's largest uncut eight-sided diamond, weighing 616 carats), which were unearthed here.

Outside, and entered for free, is a partial reconstruction of Kimberley's 1880s mining settlement, constructed using original relocated buildings, including a corrugated-iron church, funeral parlour, sweet shop and bank, as well as a functioning pub-restaurant and guesthouse. Try your luck panning for diamonds and hitting skittles in the bowling alley.

If you just want to see the hole itself, a reduced rate is offered (though not generally advertised).

### McGregor Museum

MUSEUM

(☎053-839 2700; Atlas St; adult/child R25/15; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) This