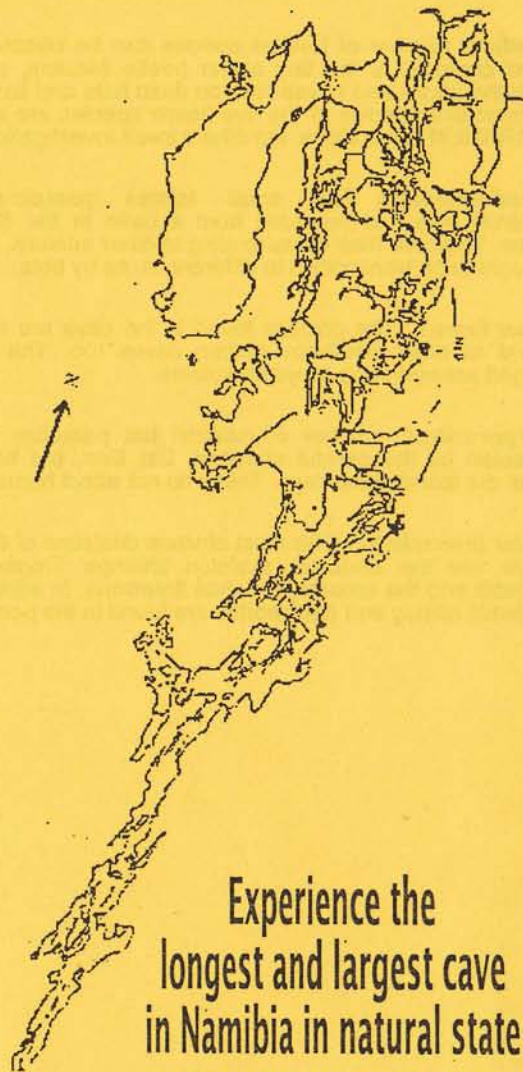


# ARNHEM CAVE

## THE UNDERGROUND TRAIL



### Location

Arnhem Cave is located in the Khomas Region, 124 km by road from Windhoek.

### Travel Directions

Travel East from Windhoek on the Gobabis road(B6). At the first turnoff after the Airport (D1455) turn South (right) on towards Nina and travel for 66 km. Turn Northeast (left) onto D1506. Travel 11 km to T-junction, then turn south (right) on D1808(signposted). Travel 6 km to farm turnoff (signposted - right).

### Geology

Arnhem Cave developed in the top of an anticline of the Nama Group along the southeastern edge of the Damara Oregon. The Arnhem Hills and the hills to the east and west are anticlines, separated by synclines (the valleys between). These synclines and antclines are gigantic structural folds of the rock layer. The anticline axis is North-south, and the whole formation dips towards the north. The cave itself developed through the solution of limestone and dolomite from between thin layers of quartzite and shales. The insoluble rock layers eventually collapsed to form the cave passages.

Several very scarce minerals are present, some completely new (swaknoite, pyrophosphite), and some previously only known from Western Australia (syngenite, dittmarite, stercorite, mundrabillaite). Most of these minerals are found in association with the bat guano. Arnhem Cave do not have many cave formations, for example draperies, stalactites or stalagmites, because the cave is to dry and there is not much carbonite source material.

### History

Contrary to popular belief, the cave was probably never inhabited by prehistoric people, as the cave offer no advantages except shelter. Shelters are constructed by indigenous people close to water and game trails, and the cave is too remote to be functional. The first freehold owner, DN Bekker, discovered the cave around 1930. A mining claim was soon registered to extract the nitrate-rich bat guano. One of the original claim markers is painted on the rocks to the left of the entrance. the hoist platform inside date from this period, It is said that the area around the hoist was originally covered to roof with bat guano. The bat guano was sieved to remove stones and gravel, and bags were filled manually. A railway line removed full bags from the cave, presumably in order to manufacture explosives or as fertilizer. The first venture collapsed when the site manager died accidently in the cave. since the guano was mined at various times by entrepreneurs. It is estimated that about 15 000 metric tons of guano deposit remain in the cave.

### Arnhem Facts

<i>Temperature</i>	: 24,5°C +- 1°C
<i>Relative Humidity</i>	: 67 - 93 %
<i>Total Length of all passages</i>	: 4501 m
<i>Cave Depth</i>	: > 110 m

### Relative size :

Arnhem is the longest cave system in Namibia (Pofadder is second at 2,8 km), the sixth longest in southern Africa (Apocalypse is first > 13 km; Cango is fifth at 5,3 km), and the 9 th longest in Africa (the longest is in Algeria at 18,4 km).

## Tourist Information

### Clothing

- Visitors are advised to dress in **old clothes** during their visit.

### Lighting

- Visitors should bring torches

Torch hire : N\$ 15.00

### Safety

- Visitors at ARNHEM farm and Cave do so at their **own risk**.
- Visitors should keep to the marked underground trail and adhere to safety instructions.
- Visitors should not disturb bats.

### Medical

- ARNHEM Cave is **dusty**
- People with claustrophobia are advised not to visit deep parts of the cave.

### Further enquiries and reservations

- 4 Bed Chalets
- Camping facilities are available
- Entrance fee to pay at reception
- Meals available on booking
- Braai facilities
- Fire wood for sale

### Swimming pool

Owner : J. Bekker.

P.O. Box 11354,  
Klein windhoek

Tel : ++ 264 62 581 885

Fax : ++ 264 62 581 885

- Come and enjoy your day at the largest and longest cave in Namibia.
- Prices are subject to change without notice.

Please make a Reservation First before visiting the Cave

## Bats

Bats sustain life underground as plants do on the surface. Bats are troglonenes, that is animals sheltering in caves but feeding outside. All the bats in ARNHEM Cave feed on insects, including some troublesome pests. Guano samples from various parts of the cave were dated, and the oldest dates indicate that the first bats entered the cave about 9500 years ago. It probably indicates the time when the cave opened to the surface, at which stage it was as big as today.

Six species of bats have been definitely recorded from ARNHEM:

*Hipposideros commersoni* The giant leaf-nosed bat, weighing up to 150g and with a wingspan of more than 60 cm, is the largest insect-eating bat in the world. ARNHEM is the southernmost breeding locality known for these bats, where they occur mostly high up in the roof.

*Hipposideros caffer* Sundevall's leaf-nosed Bat, this small bat does not live in large colonies, and can be seen in most parts of the cave.

*Miniopterus schreibersi* The long-fingered bats roost in dense colonies, and one can often see such colonies on the roof in various places in ARNHEM, appearing as if rugs were made out of bats.

*Nycteris thebaica* The very large ears of the Egyptian slit-faced bats are distinctive. They live in permanent loose colonies, usually above the hoist and behind the Bat Chamber.

*Rhinolophus clivosus* Geoffroy's horseshoe bat, this horseshoe bat, its name derived from its distinctive nose, is common throughout the cave.

*Rhinolophus denti* Denti's horseshoe bat is similar to, but much smaller than Geoffroy's horseshoe bat. They roost in the deeper parts of the cave.

## Permanent Cave Life

*Shrews* An exceptional population of shrews, *Crocidura cyanea*, was found to inhabit remote places in the cave. It was the first African mammal population (bats excluded) found to inhabit deep caves.

*Spiders* In the twilight zone (the Entrance Hall) one can see the common daddy long legs, as well as the violin spider. Deeper in the cave a small button spiders are most common, and their cobwebs appear almost everywhere.

*Beetles* A number of beetles species can be observed. the most common is the tiny spider beetle *Mezium*, of which both the adults and larvae feed on dead bats and bat guano. At least two species of the five beetle species are endemic to ARNHEM Cave alone, the others await investigation.

*Pseudoscorpions* The small tailless *pseudo-scorpion* *Beieruis* was first recorded from a cave in the Southern Cape. They use their claws to cling to other animals, and are thought to be transported to different caves by bats.

*Other insects* The crickets found in the cave are regularly found in other southern African caves too. The thread-legged assassin bug preys on spiders.

*Bat parasites* A number of external bat parasites can be detected by the careful observer. Bat flies, bat ticks and fleas are found in the cave. These do not affect humans.

*Water invertebrates* The most obvious denizens of the cave pools are the endemic skeleton shrimps *Trogloteleupia gobabis* and the amorphous white flatworms. In addition, an endemic pillbug and earthworms are found in the pools.