

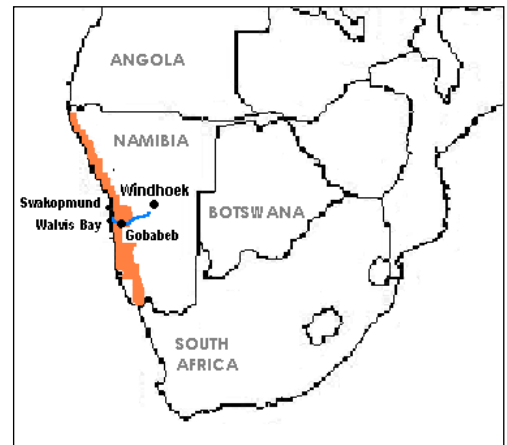
Introduction to Gobabeb

Gobabeb is an internationally recognised research and training institution in Namibia. For over 50 years, Gobabeb has been conducting environmental and ecological research in the Namib Desert. In addition to its highly regarded research, environmental education and practical science training is a cornerstone of Gobabeb. Our mission is to be a “catalyst for gathering, understanding, and sharing knowledge of arid environments”, with the overall goal of enhancing Gobabeb as a vibrant, independent research hub.

This document outlines the details of the Gobabeb internship programme—how to apply, what to bring, and what to expect. A stay at Gobabeb is a memorable and rewarding experience and we hope you apply!

Where exactly is Gobabeb?

Gobabeb is in Namibia in southwestern Africa. More specifically, Gobabeb (23°34'S, 15°03'E) is located in the Namib Desert, one of the most spectacular deserts in the world, within the Namib-Naukluft Park. It is ideally situated at the convergence of three different ecosystems: the massive dunes of the Namib Sand Sea, a recently declared World Heritage Site; the gravel plains, rocky desert and inselbergs of the Namib peneplains; and the Kuiseb riparian forest along an ephemeral river that only flows briefly during some years. The nearest town is Walvis Bay, 120 km away. The centre at Gobabeb consists of long-term research installations, laboratories, offices, staff and visitor accommodation, and educational facilities. It is not a village and has no shops, convenience stores, or restaurants.



Who lives at Gobabeb?

Gobabeb is home to a diverse group of people, including scientists, students, interns, and members of the local Topnaar community. At Gobabeb there is a mix of long and short-term residents. Generally, 15 to 20 people reside here at any given time; a combination of permanent staff, long-term MSc and PhD students, and short-term interns. Gobabebians come from all around the world—Namibia, southern African countries, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. We infrequently visit Walvis Bay to attend to personal affairs and for supplies.

What do interns do?

An internship at Gobabeb is meant to be a learning experience. Interns are expected to contribute 45 hours of work per week, and they receive two days of leave per month. When interns apply for a placement at Gobabeb, they are interviewed and accepted based on the organisation’s current activities and projects; or a project proposed by themselves that is deemed appropriate. Advertised intern positions are defined based on the organisation’s needs and as these become available. In general, interns work primarily on one aspect (environmental monitoring, training and outreach, or on a specific project). As such, it is important that you highlight your field(s) of interest and areas of experience in your application, so that we may match your skills with an appropriate placement.

As a Gobabeb intern, you will be working for the organisation, helping it to run and operate. Everybody has his/her individual project, but you are also expected to assist with outreach (visiting school groups, station tours, creating demonstration materials, developing information products) and long-term environmental monitoring (weather and atmospheric data, invertebrate and vegetation monitoring, large mammal distribution). We expect you to gain practical experience through your work, but you should also strive to experience

other opportunities in Gobabeb's multicultural and multidisciplinary milieu (visiting researchers, talks, self-organised excursions, camping in the dunes or on the plains, etc.)!

We deploy interns to assist with current projects and long-term monitoring activities, but remember that it is not set in stone. Do not hesitate to inform us if you have a specific skill, interest, project or fascination that you may wish to pursue. We will see how that may fit into our programmes, or how it will affect our work. In addition to our biology, geology and other science interns, Gobabebian alumni also include journalists, photographers, artists, community activists, writers and other desert-loving and sand-loving personalities.

Are interns paid? What does the internship cost?

International internships are non-paying positions. Namibian citizens may be offered a stipend under certain circumstances. Apart from a once-off administrative fee, Gobabeb does not charge an internship fee for the privilege to live and work in the Namib Desert.

Gobabeb is a non-profit, research organisation without any fixed income to cover recurrent costs and maintenance. Foreign nationals doing any length internship are therefore charged an intern registration fee of N\$ 2,500 that goes towards administrative and housing costs. Interns are responsible for their own meals, refreshments, recreation, off-station transport, medical costs and personal insurance. Interns usually obtain all their supplies during monthly "town trips" to Walvis Bay. Foreign interns are also responsible for work visa/work permit costs, where applicable. Special internship packages may be negotiated for applicants from institutional and academic partners.

Are there any fees?

- Old House dues - N\$75 per month: for communal cooking and cleaning supplies and monthly cable (DSTV) bills (Old House is the intern centre at Gobabeb).
- Laundry - N\$10 per load. There is no dryer, but there are plenty of clotheslines and the desert sun does quite a good job of drying clothes.

Accommodation?

Interns are currently housed in bedrooms in "Old House", caravans (trailers) or, if available, other rooms. Bedding and towels are provided. All interns are responsible for their own meals and cook in the communal kitchen in Old House. Old House is the intern centre with three bedrooms, a communal kitchen, dining room, TV room/library, and several showers and toilets. The expansion and upgrade of staff and intern accommodation is a priority for Gobabeb and opportunities to construct additional facilities are being aggressively pursued.

Old House Rules:

- **Dishes:** Each person is expected to wash his/her dishes and pots/pans by the end of the day every day. This makes it easier for everyone and ensures that we have clean dishes to use all week. Once the clean dish rack is full, we all take it upon ourselves to help unload it and pack away kitchen .
- **Refrigeration:** Each person is allocated fridge and freezer space, usually shared. Each person is responsible for managing and keeping his/her fridge space clean.
- **Cleaning:** We have a rotating/weekly chores list that includes cleaning the dining room, TVroom, surfaces, floors, and laundry. You are expected to complete your designated chore by Saturday evening and the chore wheel will rotate on Sunday. As a new intern, you will not be put on the list until after your first week.
- **TV:** Old House has a TV and DVD player for general use. Old House members pay the bill for the cable TV's (DSTV) service. If the bill isn't paid, the satellite reception will not work.

- **Dues:** N\$75/ month (paid to Old House president). This money is used for communal cleaning and cooking supplies as well as paying for the DSTV bill.

Communications?

Gobabeb has landline telephones and fax for official and emergency purposes, supplemented by e-mail, internet services, and mobile phone (MTC) services. For international interns, it's quite expensive to call home, but Skype works well in the evenings.

- **Mail:** Our post office box is checked approximately once every two weeks. You can receive personal mail and parcels/care packages through this box, but the postal service can be quite slow.

The postal address is

c/o Gobabeb Namib Research Institute

P.O. Box 953

Walvis Bay, 130300

NAMIBIA

- **Courier:** Most international courier services (DHL, FedEx, TNT, etc.) have agencies in Walvis Bay that regularly interact with Gobabeb for research material shipments. Parcels or packages destined for Gobabeb are usually collected at the first opportunity.
- **Computers and internet:** Depending on availability, you may use a station computer; otherwise, you will be expected to bring your own computer (please communicate this *before* your arrival). Gobabeb does not currently have public WiFi. We will provide you with an Ethernet connection to our server and internet. Our internet connection is slow and has limited bandwidth. Thus, during work hours (08:00-17:00) you are expected to *only* conduct work-related on-line activities. After hours, you may use the internet as you please but please do not download large files, music, or videos. If you have a computer without an Ethernet hook-up, we recommend purchasing an Ethernet adapter.

Laundry?

Gobabeb has a washing machine that all staff members can use for \$10.00/load. You should purchase and use your own laundry soap. The washing machine puts an excessive load on our energy supply, so only do laundry when you need to and consider hand-washing clothes when possible. There is no automatic dryer – hang your clothes on the lines to dry, if they sun is shining (it probably will be!), they dry very quickly!

Visas – for international interns

Please note that Namibian tourist visas are valid only for tourists, **not** for professional or educational activities. Foreign interns **must** get a study/work/business visa for stays of up to three months. This is renewable although a new application Visa applications can be submitted through some Namibian Embassies abroad. An alternate option is to apply through an immigration consultant in Namibia.

Your request for a visa will require a letter of recommendation from Gobabeb. You will also incur visa costs, currently N\$1,000 for a three-month visa (excusing agent handling fees). Gobabeb will support your request as part of its administrative procedures, but you must cover the costs for obtaining a visa.

Gobabeb recommends IBN Immigration Solutions (Pty) Ltd. in Windhoek (tel: +264-61-241786 or +264-61-402520; email: info@ibn.co.za). Processing could take anywhere from 3 weeks to several months, so please apply early.

The following documents might be required when you are applying for your visa (first confirm with consultant or embassy officials):

1. Copy of passport
2. Copy of qualifications (certificates, degrees etc)
3. Letter of support from Gobabeb
4. Letter from your University (if applicable)
5. Police clearance certificates.
6. Medical certificate - standard form

For longer stays, a work permit (valid for one to two years) is recommended. If you are a registered student at an accredited tertiary training institution and are intending to use the time at Gobabeb to conduct research for qualifying training, a study permit would be appropriate. This is a lengthy process and needs to be initiated in good time.

Money?

The Namibian dollar (NAD) is tied to the South African rand (ZAR), and both currencies are accepted throughout Namibia. All other currencies are NOT accepted and can only be exchanged for legal tender (NAD or ZAR) at banks or registered currency exchanges. Blackmarket exchanges are virtually unknown in Namibia. Automatic teller machines that are linked to international banks and credit cards are common in most towns. Bank and credit cards are also widely accepted by shops and businesses, so there is no need to bring a huge sum of cash money. Foreign interns should arrange ahead of time with their banks or credit card agencies for card use in Namibia and emergency contacts to resolve card use issues.

Transportation?

Gobabeb provides emergency and work-related on-station transport. Longer term interns may be authorised to use a Gobabeb vehicle if they have an international driver's licence and can manage a manual transmission (stick shift). You will have monthly 'town trips' for grocery shopping. If you need something from town (120 km away!), you will either need to find a ride or ask someone to bring whatever you need. You might also be able to take advantage of infrequent services/journeys to Walvis Bay. Ask around, because there are often individuals going to town who might give you a ride or pick up something for you if you need it. Casual visits to town for routine purchases or recreation are unlikely if you do not have a private car or personal rental.

Leisure activities?

Gobabeb maintains a swimming pool and a basketball/volleyball/tennis court. There is also a sand/beach volleyball court in the dry riverbed and a rough soccer field. Old House has a television and DVD player. Old House also has an extensive library, several board games and card games but if you have a favourite game, we recommend bringing it! Books are also available from the centre's research library. Additionally, there are many scenic areas to hike and explore around the centre, or, if you have your own mountain bike that you can bring along, cycling is a popular pastime. Bring your own music, musical instruments, books, sports gear and other entertainment and feel welcome to share, where feasible.

How do I live in the Desert?

Gobabeb has an arid climate, and as such temperatures are extremely variable. Temperatures may range from mid-40s (degrees Celsius) to nearly freezing – any time of the year! Bring clothes for all weather. It is a desert, so copious amounts of sunscreen, a water bottle, and a hat are essential. It is also quite remote, so make sure you have personal medicines and hygiene products.

Living in the Namib-Naukluft Park gives us easy access to nature and the unique wildlife here, but it also means that we live closely with all the creatures that inhabit the desert. We must understand and respect the creatures with which we share this beautiful place, so be conscious of your surroundings and keep an eye out for organisms that might harm you. It is important to wear shoes at all times and use a torch when walking at night. The most common, scary creatures we see around are scorpions and solifuges, which are not aggressive and mostly harmless. Sometimes we see snakes, but not very often. If you do encounter a snake, back away slowly and tell someone (i.e. Old House President) what you saw and where you saw it.

Electricity?

Namibia uses aberrant southern African 3-pin power outlets. Adaptors for common 2-pin power supplies are readily available, but you will have to buy international adaptors for US, UK, Asian and European pin configurations for yourself. If you have multiple chargers or power supplies, the best solution may be to bring a multiplug from your own country and fit it at Gobabeb with a local 3-pin plug. For battery powered products, we recommend you bring enough rechargeable batteries to have at least one set of spare batteries for all your equipment.

Electricity at Gobabeb comes mainly from our solar panel array and is stored in batteries for overnight use. We have a back-up diesel generator as well. When we run out of electricity, the generator kick in to cover our needs. We do our best to conserve energy to minimise our use of diesel and prolong the life of our batteries. Please do not bring any power-hungry electric devices without prior consultation. Personal items such as hairdryers; electric elements, heaters or blankets; electric kitchen utensils; and other forms of non-essential electric products are not allowed. As a general rule, turn off your computer screens when you leave the office, unplug appliances and/or turn the wall switch off when you are finished, etc. Instead of using the harsh overhead lights in the office, consider opening the window and working by the beautiful natural light of the Namib!

Water?

Gobabeb is in the desert, so the most important personal responsibility you have is not to get dehydrated. Drink enough water and make sure you always have enough water with you! Our rather salty water at the station comes from a borehole in the Kuiseb River that is pumped up to Gobabeb's iconic water tower. A reverse osmosis plant was recently installed to improve the quality of drinking water, but all the tap water at the centre is safe to drink. Water is a precious commodity here in Namibia, so use it wisely. Take short showers, turn off the tap when you brush your teeth, make sure the tap doesn't drip, use the ½ flush when appropriate, cover the swimming pool after use, etc. Be conscious of your water use because it is a very scarce and valuable resource here, but make sure you drink enough of it.

First Aid?

If you are hurt or sick, we have a very basic first-aid kit onsite. If you have particular medication needs, it would be a good idea to keep personal supplies on hand. The nearest resident medical staff are at a clinic at Utuseb, some 60 km downstream from Gobabeb. The nearest hospitals and pharmacies are 120 km away in Walvis Bay. The services of a government-sponsored travelling clinic that regularly passes the centre in serving the local community may also soon become available. World class medical practitioners and hospitals are available in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. Provision is made for monthly installments to allow emergency evacuation services by road and air for longer-term interns at Gobabeb.

There are very few venomous animals or poisonous plants at Gobabeb. As a rule:

- If you go out biking, camping, exercising, hiking, or working, tell somebody where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Do not handle wild animals if you are not trained and authorised to do so.
- Do not ingest any plant material that is unfamiliar.
- Keep your distance from snakes, scorpions, spiders, and wild mammals, however cute and photogenic.
- Don't be stupid!!! Do not take unnecessary risks that may lead to injury. Gobabeb is remote and in a wilderness area.
- Any adventure sports you engage in will be at your own risk, so make sure you have the right training and equipment
- Protect yourself – drink water, use sunscreen, wear a hat, and **drink water!!!**

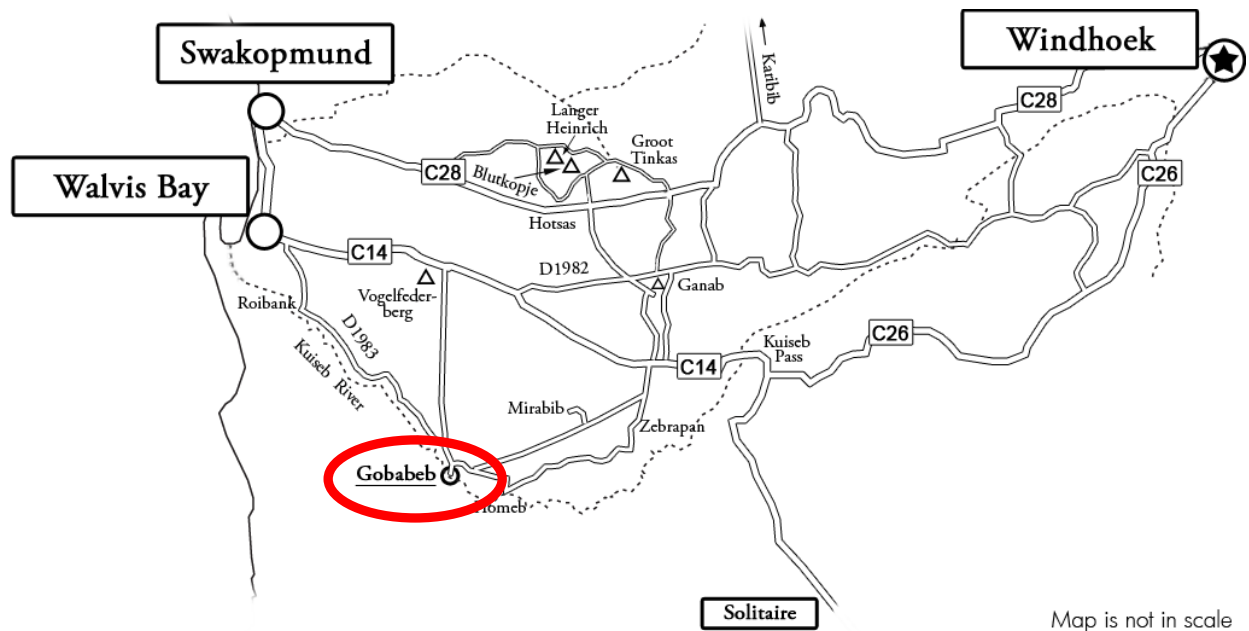
In case of a medical emergency, please get into contact with Gillian Maggs-Kölling: +264 81 3323576 or Elna Irish: + 264 81 2755864.

Other things to keep in mind?

- You can exchange foreign currency at the airport when you enter the country.
- You'll do your shopping in the last town you are in before coming to Gobabeb. You should buy enough supplies for 4 weeks, so make a list of what you need before the time.
- Gobabeb has mobile phone (MTC cell) coverage, but roaming is expensive. Bring an unlocked mobile phone and get a local SIM card and enough phone credit before leaving for Gobabeb.
- Electricity at Gobabeb is available 24 hours. High voltage personal appliances are not permitted at Gobabeb (toaster, hairdryer, kettle), so no need to bring them!
- The tap water is potable and tastes very good thanks to our reverse-osmosis filtration unit.
- Mosquitoes do occur at Gobabeb, but it is not in a malarial zone.
- Gobabeb is 120 km from the nearest town. Please take note that opportunities to go to town are limited.

Arriving in Namibia?

Interns are responsible for getting to Walvis Bay, where Gobabeb staff will pick them up for transport to the station. On occasion, interns can arrange transport from Windhoek. In all cases, please arrange for your transfer early. You may be asked to liaise with a specific person, so please make sure to let the person know immediately if there is a problem. It takes approximately two hours to drive to Walvis Bay, so we will appreciate if you can tell us if there is a problem before we needlessly drive through for pick-up.



Map is not in scale

You may choose to go directly to Gobabeb on arrival in Namibia. In that case, we recommend you book your flight directly to Walvis Bay International Airport. There are several flights every day from Johannesburg, South Africa; Cape Town, South Africa; and Windhoek, Namibia.

You may prefer to first arrive in Windhoek. There are bus services between Windhoek and Walvis Bay (passing through Swakopmund), the main ones being Welwitschia Shuttle and Intercape Mainliner. Ask about schedules and tickets at your hostel.

Many interns will probably fly through South Africa. Most will continue to Namibia, in which case we recommend that you fly straight to Walvis Bay. Some interns choose to spend a few days in South Africa before flying or bussing to Namibia. The most reliable bus service to Namibia is Intercape Mainliner.

If you obtained your visa through a consultant, you will have a scanned copy of the visa. While passing through Namibian passport control, be sure to stress that you will be volunteering. You should get a large square stamp in your passport, and the officer will hand write the details of your visa. The officer will also stamp the visa letter. If you can, try to keep this paper.

Options for good value, central accommodation in Windhoek include: “The Cardboard Box Backpackers” (+264-61-228994; cardboardbox@bigfoot.com) and “Chameleon City Backpackers”(+264-61-244347; info@chameleon.com.na). If you arrive in Windhoek by air, take a taxi to the hostel; if you arrive by bus, you should be able to arrange a free pick-up by the hostel.

If you obtained your visa through a consultant, you may want to meet with them and have them look over your passport to ensure that everything is in order and settle outstanding payments.

What about food and supplies?

Gobabeb is about 2 hours from the nearest town. There are monthly supply trips to Walvis Bay or Swakopmund, where there are supermarkets and other shops. At Gobabeb, you will have access to a fridge and deep-freezer, and shelf space in the kitchen. The kitchen has gas stoves and ovens, but no microwave oven or other electric appliances. The kitchen is equipped with pots and pans, Tupperware, cutlery, and crockery. You should try and buy enough food for a month, although it is likely you will be able to get supplies more frequently. It is common to send a list of supplies for another staff member to purchase when they have to go to town for some official duty, or sometimes for you to go with such

an opportunity if arranged ahead of time. The main message to keep in mind is self-sufficiency.

Sample shopping list for 4 weeks:

Food:

- Starches – mealie meal, pasta, rice, etc.
- Sugar (2.5 kg)
- Flour (5 kg)
- Yeast (10 packets)
- Fresh vegetables that last (potatoes - big pack, onions, pumpkin, etc.)
- Fresh fruit that last (apples, oranges, etc.)
- Eggs (around 15-30)
- Bread
- Fresh vegetables for 1-2 weeks – tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, cucumber, etc.
- Frozen vegetables, meat, fish
- Canned items
- Soup packets
- Cool drink or squash mix
- Longlife Milk (min. 6)
- Coffee or tea
- Cooking oil
- Vinegar
- Spreads (butter, jam, honey, cheese etc.)
- Spices (any you prefer, we have some here for public use)
- Breakfast cereal or porridge
- Snacks and comfort food
- Toilet paper
- Personal hygiene products
- Personal medicines and first aid
- Laundry detergent
- Personal vices (soda, wine, other poisons)
- Torch (Flashlight) batteries and other consumables

Provided:

- Dishwashing materials
- Salt
- Matches for gas stoves and ovens

If you have any additional questions, please contact our intern coordinator at internship@gobabeb.org