As a fair proportion of the world's gem-quality diamonds originates from here, the coastal strip between Oranjemund and Lüderitz is also known as Namibia's “Diamond Coast”. What began in 1908 with the discovery of a few glittering stones by a railway worker at Kolmanskop near Lüderitz has since developed into one of the largest and most remarkable mining operations in history. But as the once fabulously rich onshore resources dwindle and mining shifts offshore and to the seabed, the area also becomes known for its unique landscapes of which the relics of former mining activities form an integral part.

Shortly after the diamond finds were confirmed, the entire coastal stretch between Marmora in the south and Lüderitz in the north was pegged. Numerous companies formed and acquired mining rights, and conditions on the diamond fields soon became chaotic. In September 1908, the “Sperrgebiet” (prohibited territory), which covers a 100 km wide coastal strip between the Orange River and latitude 26 south, was proclaimed, and the sole mining right reverted to the Deutsche Kolonial-Gesellschaft für Südwestafrika. Between 1908 and 1913, 4.7 million carats of diamonds, worth about 150 million Reichsmark were produced. After World War I, in 1920, nine companies working in the “Sperrgebiet” amalgamated into Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM), a subsidiary of DeBeers of Kimberley, who continued to hold the exclusive exploration and mining rights. In 1994 the Namibian government joined this venture to form a new company, NAMDEB. Since the Sperrgebiet National Park was proclaimed in 2008, conservation, tourism and mining endeavour to co-exist in the area.