

TRACKS SAFARIS

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NAMIBIAN HIGHLIGHTS GUIDED CAMPING JOURNEY

16 DAYS / 15 NIGHTS



NAMIBIA - a place where undulating deserts fold down to meet a tempestuous coastline, Namibia offers scenic beauty, the splendour of wildlife, unusual geological formations, pristine wilderness and a diverse and friendly nation.

Namibian is a vast, sparsely-populated country with a unique landscape varying from golden sand dunes to lush tropical vegetation, from river cantons to beautiful deserted beaches.

Truly a land of contrasts, breath-taking scenery, teeming wildlife parks and wide-open spaces are just some of the reasons Namibia is known as "Africa's Gem".

One of the first countries to include protection of the environment in its constitution, Namibia exudes an amazing sense of space and freedom. Home to 13 distinct cultural groups which all maintain their ancient traditions, the country's Germanic colonial past is reflected in the architecture of most of the major towns.

Day 1

Arrival-Windhoek-Kalahari Desert (332km)

Anib Lodge (camping)

Lunch, Dinner

Upon arrival with an early flight into Windhoek at Hosea Kutako Airport your tour Guide will meet and assist you and depart to drive direct to the Kalahari Desert.

Rest of the day at own leisure.

THE KALAHARI DESERT - often surprises people when they first see it. It is very different from the Namib. First of all, remember that the Kalahari is not a desert. It receives more rain than a true desert should. The Kalahari is a fossil desert. Don't expect to find tall Sossusvlei-style dunes devoid of greenery here.

The Kalahari's dunes are very different. They are often equally beautiful, but usually greener and less stark – and with this vegetation comes its ability to support more flora and fauna than a true desert.

Thus a few days spent in a Kalahari environment adds another dimension to a trip to Namibia, and provides game-viewing away from the ever-popular Etosha, or the lush reserves of the Caprivi.

Day 2

Kalahari Desert – Fish River Canyon (517km)

Canon Roadhouse (camping)

Full Board

In the morning depart and continue driving towards the south via Mariental towards Keetmanshoop.

Stop over at the Quiver Tree Forest for a short visit. Located just north of the southern centre of Keetmanshoop, (officially the sunniest town in the world), we make camp and have time to explore the area on foot, before you continue driving to the Fish River Canyon.

Quiver trees are not in fact trees; they are a type of aloe, (*Aloe Dichotoma*), so called because the branches fork "dictomously". These weird looking plants dot the landscape in this part of the world and are locally common; however they are one of the world's rarest flora species.

We leave Keetmanshoop and head further south to Fish River Canyon. We are heading to the main view point where we can see how impressive this canyon actually is. This is an ideal opportunity for photos and to spend some time experiencing this amazing sight. Viewing from the top we can see the river sparkling in the sunlight far below us, and can barely imagine how many millennia it took for the forces of erosion to carve such a magnificent vista.

We camp tonight in the south at Canon Roadhouse.



THE QUIVERTREE FOREST – Also known as the “Kokerboomwoud”, this is a dense stand of *Aloe dichotoma* tree-aloes. The quivertree, *Aloe dichotoma*, occurs sporadically over a large area of southern Namibia and the Northern Cape, usually on steep rocky slopes. Its name refers to its supposed use by the bushmen for making the quivers for their arrows – the inside of a dead branch consists of only a light, fibrous heart which is easily gouged out to leave a hollow tube.

The quivertree is specially adapted to survive in extremely arid conditions: its fibrous branches and trunk are used for water storage, as are its thick, succulent leaves, whilst water lost through transpiration is reduced by waxy coatings on the tree’s outside surfaces. Additionally, in common with most desert-adapted flora, its growth rate is very slow.

THE GIANTS PLAYGROUND – Just 5km further from Quivertree Forest, down the C29 are some marvellous balancing basalt rocks known as the Giant’s Playground. Reminiscent of formations in Zimbabwe’s Matobo Hills, these are more limited but still interesting.

FISH RIVER CANYON - Eroded over millennia, the Fish River Canyon is the second largest natural gorge in Africa. Set in harsh, stony plains, dotted with drought resistant succulents such as the distinctive quiver tree or Kokerboom, the canyon is a spectacular natural phenomenon that took hundreds of millions of years to evolve. While its full length is 160km – the width is up to 27km and the depth up to 550m – it’s most spectacular section is the 56-km stretch between the northernmost and southernmost viewpoints.

The attraction of this rugged mountain land is its isolated and other-worldly landscape and wealth of interesting plants. Geologically and botanically the area is similar to South Africa’s Richtersveld south of the Orange River. The long-term conservation objective is to manage this area jointly with the Richtersveld National Park as one integrated Transfrontier Conservation Area which was realized in 2003.

Day 3

Fish River Canyon

Klipspringer Mule Trail

Full Board

Your Guide will drop you off at Cañon Mule Station in Gondwana Cañon Park at the Fish River Canyon. After we have discussed everything there is to know about the tour and acquainted ourselves with the equipment, we are taken to the Horse Shoe Camp.



Horse Shoe Camp:

A cabin perched on the northern rim of the Fish River Canyon welcomes hikers and campers after the day’s adventure. A peek from the cabin’s windows provides an unparalleled view of the natural horseshoe form of the northern Canyon. Hikers pitch their tents outside the cabin and use the facilities inside, which include a toilet and shower with breathtaking views of the Canyon. Cooking facilities are also available in the cabin, while the outside fireplace is ideal for a barbeque.

Day 4

Mule Trekking (approx. 16 km)

Klipspringer Mule Trail

Full Board

We enjoy our first breakfast out in the open. Then we continue downstream along the Fish River. Patches of river pebbles alternate with slabs of rock and sand dunes. Dramatic chapters of Earth's history can be gleaned from the massive layers of rock. At lunchtime we stop for a picnic in a shaded little spot. Occasionally we come across deep pools of water in which we take a refreshing dip or fish for Fish River carp. In the afternoon we arrive at Echo Pools Camp next to the Fish River. Sipping sundowners we watch in awe as the rock reflects the light of the setting sun in a blaze of colours

Echo Pool Camp: Echo Pool Camp is named after the echo reverberating from the arched rock faces. The camp is right next to the Fish River.

Day 5

Mule Trekking (approx. 18 km)

Klipspringer Mule Trail

Full Board

After an early breakfast we set off at dawn and follow the Fish River further downstream. Then we walk on zebra paths, leading us up to a plateau, through rugged valleys and across stony and sandy plains. Every now and then we stop to marvel at the vast canyon scenery. At midday we have a picnic in the shade. Finally we reach the gorge of the seasonal Gaap River. Bend by bend it turns greener and greener: Several fountains provide trees and shrubs with water throughout the year. In the early evening we arrive at Cañon Outpost, situated in an oasis-like paradise

Cañon Outpost:

The Cañon Outpost is hidden in the Gaap Canyon of the Holoog River, a tributary of the Fish River. It is an old farmhouse next to gushing springs, and one of the most secluded hideouts in Namibia. The Canon Outpost offers 3 bedrooms, a self-catering kitchen as well as outside cooking facilities. A huge lawn leads to the riverbed where ten tents complete with beds are perched in an Acacia stand out of view of the main house. Facilities include communal showers, toilets and solar power.

Day 6

Fish River Canyon – Tiras Mountains

Sinclair Guestfarm (room)

Full Board

Transfer to Cañon Mule Station - After breakfast we pile into the open vehicle which takes us to the final destination of our roundtrip. As we pull up at Cañon Mule Station our tour has come to its end.

Your guide will await you and depart immediately to drive to the south towards Helmeringhausen towards the Tiras Mountains to the Guestfarm Sinclair, a typical Namibian Sheep farm.

Day 7

Tiras Mountains – Namib Naukluft Park

Sesreim (camping)

Full Board

Today depart the Guestfarm and drive further North towards Nambi Rand Reserve to the Namib Naukluft Park.

Traversing this bleak yet beautiful landscape, the terrain begins to change and we cross some open grass savannah and farmlands before the terrain begins to give way to the immense red sand dune desert of the Namib. We aim to arrive at our camp during the late afternoon and watch the colours glow and change on distant mountains to the east.



Day 8**Namib-Sossusvlie-Namib Naukluft****Sesreim (camping)****Full Board**

A pre-dawn start is essential this morning as we want to catch the soft light of the sunrise on the desert. After passing through Sesriem, the gateway to the dunes and driving into the heart of the dune field, we reach Sossusvlei itself by walking the last 5 km through the dunes.

The walk is like nothing else, in the cool of the morning, with soft sunlight just beginning to play over the dunes creating a sharp light and shadow contrast across the whole desert.

Ancient mineral pans, stunted camel thorn trees and the chance of seeing a gemsbok or maybe an ostrich make the photo opportunities perfect.

We spend the morning in and around Sossusvlei, also visiting dune 45, and as the day wears on we return to Sesriem for lunch to escape the heat of the afternoon. Before you depart the park a short excursion to the Sesriem Canyon.



SOSSUSVLEI - Many visitors to Namibia say that no part of the desert is visually more stunning than Sossusvlei with its monumentally high dunes. These gigantic star-shaped mountains of sand – one of the largest was measured from the base to be 325m high – are a sought after topic for artists and photographers. The warm tints of the sand contrast vividly with the dazzling white surfaces of the clay pans at their bases. One of these, referred to as **Dead Pan**, is a large ghostly expanse of dried white clay, punctuated by skeletons of ancient camel-thorn trees, carbon-dated as being between 500 and 600 years old. The dunes in the area are shaped by strong multi-directional winds and have three to five sinuous crests, which meet at their highest point to give them their star shape.

SESRIEM CANYON - Sesriem Canyon is where the erosion of centuries has incised a narrow gorge about 1km in length. At the foot of the gorge, which plunges down 30-40 metres, are pools that become replenished after good rains. Sesriem derives its name from the time when early pioneers tied six lengths of rawhide thongs together to draw water from these pools.

Day 9**Namib Naukluft – Swakopmund****Swakopmund Guesthouse (room)****Full Board**

Depart and drive along the mountains, via savannah towards the Gaub and Kuiseb pass towards the west to Walvis Bay the coast. Visit the Lagoon of Walvis Bay before continue driving towards Swakopmund.

Rest of the day at own leisure.

SWAKOPMUND is much loved because of its old-world charm and relaxed atmosphere. Founded in 1892 during the period of German colonial rule, it served as the territory's main harbour for many years. Today's lush green lawns, palm trees and carefully tended and colourful public gardens enhance this curious desert town, hedged by desert and sea. Swakopmund has several excellent restaurants, pubs and discos and a few nightclubs. A special feature of the town is its jewellery shops, which offer pieces ranging from

contemporary African to continental designs. Art and craft shops offer local products, while street vendors sell Namibian rural art.

The museum on the beachfront was founded by Dr Alfons Weber in 1951, and contains the largest collection of birds' eggs in Namibia. The reference library, known as the Sam Cohen Library, comprises some 6 000 volumes, including the renowned 2 000-title Africana collection of the late Ferdinand Stich. The archives, housed in the same building, allow visitors access to a unique collection of newspapers dating from 1898 to the present day.

Day 10

Swakopmund – Damaraland

Aba Huab (camping)

Full Board

Depart Swakopmund and continue driving inland towards Hentiesbaai, visit Cape Cross where it is possible to see thousands of Cape Fur Seals in the water and on the surrounding rocks and beaches.

From there you will turn east, inland and back into the desert, travelling on to the small town of Uis, an old mining town, located more or less in the middle of no-where. Uis is one of the best places to buy semi-precious stones for which Namibia is famous. Here, rough Amethyst, Tourmaline etc. can be found at bargain prices.

From Uis it is now only a short drive to Namibia's highest mountain, The Brandberg, (2573 m). Brandberg Mountain is an ancient Bushman spiritual site; you can have a quick stop at Brandberg before continuing to Aba Huab.



Day 11

Damaraland – Kaokoland

Palmwag Lodge (camping)

Full Board

Early in the morning take a Detour to the west to visit the ancient Bushman rock engravings at Twyfelfontein.

Leave the engraving and drive further to the North towards the Kaokoland to Palmwag Lodge.

In the afternoon enjoy a Nature/Game Drive

Day 12

Kaokoland

Palmwag Lodge (camping)

Breakfast, Dinner

After Breakfast depart on a Himba Excursion for a full day and visit the nomadic People.

THE HIMBA - An ancient tribe of semi-nomadic pastoralists many of whom still live and dress according to ancient traditions, the Himba live in scattered settlements throughout the Kunene Region. They are a tall, slender and statuesque people, characterised especially by their proud yet friendly bearing. The women especially are noted for their unusual sculptural beauty, enhanced by intricate hairstyles and traditional adornments. They rub their bodies with red ochre and fat, a treatment that protects their skins against the harsh desert climate.

The homes of the Himba are simple, cone-shaped structures of saplings, bound together with palm leaves and plastered with mud and dung. A family may move from one home to another several times a year to seek grazing for their goats and cattle. Men, women and

children adorn themselves with necklaces, bracelets, anklets and belts made from iron and shell beads with unusual and striking designs. These are becoming items of commercial value and are being produced on a small scale for the urban market. Sculptural headrests in particular are sought-after items.



Day 13

Koakoland-Etoshia National Park

Okaukuejo Resorts

Full Board

Early morning do a guided walk to "Twee Palm". Return to Palmwag and drive towards Kamanjab to the Etoshia National Park. While you are in the Etoshia National Park, your first game viewing starts. Continue driving towards Okaukuejo.

In the evening enjoy the famous waterhole.

Day 14

Etoshia National Park

Namutoni Resorts

Full Board

Full Day game viewing through the park to drive towards Namutoni, your guide will stop at different waterholes, and you will be able to spot different animals as what you have seen in the Okaukuejo area.

Day 15

Etosha National Park-Otjiwarongo (350km)

Okonjima Lodge

Full Board

Time for one more morning game drive before we leave Etosha, but it's not the end of our game viewing. We will aim to arrive at Okonjima during the middle of the afternoon, giving us time to set up our camp and to relax in the shade or plunge into the pool.

Okonjima is the home of the Africat Foundation, a specialist conservation concern that centres its operations on the African Big Cats, particularly cheetah.

Most of the animals currently living at Okonjima have been rescued from various desperate situations, being orphaned or caught in a trap, and the aim of the rehabilitation process is to attempt to re-introduce them into the wild.



Day 16

Otjiwarongo - Windhoek (300 km)

Tamboti Guesthouse (room)

Lunch, Breakfast

This morning you will be taken on a tour during which you will be able to meet, close-up-and-personal, some of the cheetah that are going through the Africat rehabilitation programme.

Most of the animals currently living at Okonjima have been rescued from various desperate situations, being orphaned or caught in a trap, and the aim of rehabilitation process is to attempt to re-introduce them into the wild.

After our educational tour we will return to camp and prepare our return journey to Windhoek. We are due back into the city around 15:00 and you will be dropped off at your accommodation on our return.

Namibia's capital WINDHOEK is often described as a city with a "continental" atmosphere. This can be ascribed to its architecture – historical buildings dating back to German colonial rule – as well as to its cuisine, culture, dress codes and educational institutions. At the same time Windhoek has the colour, sound and tempo of a modern African city. Pavement displays of African drums and woodcarvings from the north contrast with elegant shops offering sophisticated Swakara garments and Namibian gemstones set in individually designed pieces of jewellery. While some shops display clothing, silver and glassware imported from Europe, others stock casual and colourful cloths from West Africa.

Because of the area's plentiful hot springs, Windhoek was initially known as Ai-gams (spelt /Ai//Gams to indicate the click sound), a Nama word meaning "firewater", "steam" or "smoke", and Otjomuise, a Herero word meaning the "place of steam". The Nama captain Jan Jonker Afrikaner, gave the town the name it carries today. In the early 1840's Afrikaner settled where the most powerful spring reached the surface. It is thought that in a moment of nostalgia he named the place after Windhoek, the farm in the Cape where he was born. During the German colonial administration the town called Windhuk, which later became Windhoek.

Public transport consists mainly of taxis, while a bus service takes passengers between Katutura and Khomasdal to Windhoek and its various suburbs.

Day 17

Windhoek-Depart

Breakfast

During the day at own leisure where you can do last minute shopping before a transfer will meet you at your guesthouse and depart to the Airport for you to check in right in time for your flight back.

Included in above quote:

- Accommodation and meals as indicated in the routing / itinerary.
- Professional English speaking guide & guides accommodation and meals
- 4x4 Double Cab OR Nissan X-Trail or similar, included Super Cover and Fuel
- All Park entrance Fees and sight-seeing
- All activities and sight-seeing plus extra activities as Canon Roadhouse
- Full Camping Equipment of Tents, Mattresses etc.
- Transfers from Airport to Town
- VAT + Tourism Levy

Exclusive of:

- All beverages and alcoholic drinks and additional meals not indicated in routing
- Optional Excursions and Activities
- Sleeping bag and Pillows (Sleeping Bag can be rented for N\$50.00 per person for the whole duration of the tour)
- Porterages and Gratuities
- Travel Insurance and entrance VISA



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