

## NAMIBIA TOURING OPPORTUNITIES

Namibia is a vast country dominated by the Namib Desert, an extensive inland plateau and stunning geological mountain ranges. From the lush, northern Caprivi Strip and the wildlife of Etosha National Park to the vast and unforgettable Namib Desert and the desolate Skeleton Coast; the destination has something to offer everyone



## WHY VISIT NAMIBIA?

The following points are just some of the reasons why Namibia is a world-class safari destination:

- Namibia is an all-year-round wilderness destination
- Great value-for-money destination
- Bountiful sunshine
- Pristine clear skies for astronomers and keen star-gazers
- Vast unspoilt natural scenic beauty
- Abundance of wildlife
- Prolific bird life
- A rich diversity of geological phenomena, such as the Fish River Canyon, Brandberg, Spitzkoppe and the unique star shaped dune mountains in Sossusvlei
- Namibia boasts two spectacular deserts – the Kalahari Desert and Namib Desert, each with distinctive wildlife and scenery.
- The Namib Desert, which is the only desert, that is home to elephant, rhino, lion and giraffe and one of the world's oldest living plants – the Welwitschia mirabilis.
- The Namib, at 80 million years, is the oldest desert in the world.
- The world's highest sand dunes are at Sossusvlei in the Namib-Naukluft National Park
- Easily accessible wilderness paradises such as the Etosha National Park, the Waterberg Plateau National Park, the Fish River Canyon and the Namib-Naukluft National Park
- Etosha Pan – an oasis in the centre of the vast semi-desert region, one of Africa's largest game reserves
- Diverse cultures: from San/Bushman, Portuguese and German influences to the Himba people still living their age-old traditional lifestyles

- Namibia is a popular self-drive destination with excellent infrastructure
- A variety of exciting activities such as, Dune Boarding on the highest dunes in the world
- Fresh oysters of the finest quality found at Lüderitz and Swakopmund
- Namibia is virtually free of tropical diseases

## Looking for Adventure?

### Air:

#### • Ballooning & Sky Adventures

Adding an exhilarating dimension to a visit to the Namib Desert is a trip in a hot-air balloon.

#### • Skydiving

For those individuals who enjoy nature best by taking their lives into their hands and having adrenaline pumping through their veins, skydiving over land and sea is the answer.

#### • Paragliding

Paragliding enthusiasts occasionally undertake powered paragliding excursions along the coast.

### Birding:

Namibia is home to over 630 bird species. While the majority of these occur in the water-rich north-eastern regions of Kavango and Caprivi, a considerable number are found in the desert proper, such as Dune lark and Hartlaub's francolin. Birding at the coast, especially at Walvis Bay Lagoon, is a particularly rewarding experience.

### Water:

White-river rafting, has taken off in a big way on the Kunene River. An irresistible attraction of the Kunene is the Epupa Falls with its scenic surroundings and interesting vegetation and bird life.

Canoeing safaris are offered down the Orange River, departing from Noordoewer or Aussenkehr and ending at Aussenkehr or the Fish River mouth respectively.

### Dune Adventures:

Namibia is one of the best places in the world to enjoy sand skiing, the best venues for sand skiing is the 30 km coastal dune belt between Walvis Bay and Swakopmund.

### Abseiling:

It is one of the most spectacular rock sports. Once you have overcome the fear of stepping backwards into the void, however, it is surprisingly easy.

### Golfing:

#### • Windhoek

The Windhoek Country Club in Windhoek, on the outskirts of Windhoek, offers an 18-hole golf course.

#### • Swakopmund

Rossmund is a grass golf course at the edge of the Namib Desert some ten miles from the coastal town of Swakopmund where golfers are invariably greeted by a herd of springbok quietly grazing on a fairway, or by a gaggle of Egyptian geese.

#### • Henties Bay

Besides being visited by anglers from all over Southern Africa, Henties Bay is also frequented for its unusual nine-hole golf course with its well-tended greens and fairways of virgin desert.

### Stargazing:

Namibia's climate, altitude, minor light and air pollution offers stargazers sights of the southern as well as the northern hemisphere, missing only a few degrees around the celestial north pole. The Hess Telescope is situated 100 km west of Windhoek, an area well known for its excellent optical quality.

### Fishing in Namibia:

#### • Coastal Angling

Aspects that make angling from the beach especially enjoyable are the peaceful desert environments and the uncrowded beaches despite thousands of anglers flock to the coast during the holiday seasons.

#### • Freshwater angling

Namibia's dams in the interior offer several options for those wishing to try their hand at freshwater angling.

- **Fly-fishermans paradise**

The far eastern tip of Caprivi, at the confluence of the Chobe and Zambezi rivers, is regarded as a fly-fisherman's paradise second to none.

## **Horse & Camel riding:**

Namibia has the perfect conditions for horse riding, with routes crossing mountains, bush and wooded areas to desert plains and dunes.

## **Skuba diving:**

Namibia's coast presents a daunting challenge, as sea temperatures vary from 9-C to 17-C and visibility is often as little as half a meter, at best no more than three meters.

### **Spelology Scuba Diving:**

- **Dragon's Breath**

The largest known subterranean lake in the world is in the cave referred to as Dragon's Breath on the farm Harasib. Requires valid cave-diving qualifications.

- **Lake Otjikoto**

Situated 24km Northwest of the town of Tsumeb and is 76m deep. Qualified divers can explore an underwater museum of armament and weaponry from the First World War.

- **Harasib Cave and Lake**

Close to the Dragon's Breath, is the Harasib Cave and Lake, entered via an opening on top of the Ghaub Mountain. A special feature of this lake is the spectacular stalactites and stalagmites.

## **Hiking:**

Owing to high summer temperatures, tough terrain and scarcity of water, hiking in Namibia requires careful planning. Hiking is not advisable in the summer months when temperatures often exceed 40 C.

- **Fishriver Canyon**

By far the most popular hike in Namibia and one of Southern Africa's top five. The route takes hikers through an ancient landscape of rock and utter silence.

- **The Namib-Naukluft Hiking Trail**

Traverses the rugged Naukluft Mountains. Hikers have several options ranging from a tough 120 km long circular route over eight days to a less strenuous 60 km circular four-day trail, demanding a high degree of fitness.

- **Ugab River Hiking Trail**

In the south of the Skeleton Coast Park, hikers follow the course of the Ugab River on this 50 km long three day route, and explore the fascinating granite rocks on the windswept plains adjoining the river.

- **The Feral Horse Hiking Trail**

A 28 km route on a farm bordering the Sperrgebiet provides hikers with viewpoints along the trail overlooking the seemingly endless Namib plains, home to the famed wild horses of the Namib.

- **Dassie Trails**

The Dassie trails network meanders through granite outcrops, secluded little valleys and the undulating plateau. Along the 50km selfguided trail hikers are rewarded with far reaching views over the Namib plains and the Gamsberg.

- **Sweet Thorn Hiking Trail**

Situated in the Daan Viljoen Park, 24km west of Windhoek. It is a 34km self guided trail traversing the undulating hills of the Khomas Hochland.

- **Tok Tokkie Trails**

This is a 17km guided trail, alternating between the gravel plains, sand dunes and inselbergs of the Namibrand Nature Reserve.

- **Waterberg Hiking Trail**

This is a self-guided 50km trail with the possibility of a face-to-face encounter with a black rhino or a buffalo.

- **Waterberg Wilderness Trail**

On this trail, hikers will gain a valuable insight into the complex and fragile nature of the environment, with the added attraction of stalking game on foot.

- **Hardap Trail**

Visitors to the Hardap Resort can explore the game park on foot by following the Hardap Trail, with a 15 km and 9 km option.

## **SPECIFIC PLACES**

## The Namib

### NamibRand Nature Reserve

Red dunes, vast plains and rugged mountains make up the serene landscape between the inhospitable Namib Desert and the escarpment of the interior plateau. The seasons supply gentle dots of colour – sometimes whitish-yellow, sometimes light green grass.



Red dunes

For nature lovers and photographers: a dream of a landscape. NamibRand Nature Reserve is situated in this area. With almost 200,000 ha it is Namibia's largest private conservation area. To the west it borders on Namib Naukluft Park, while the Nubib Mountain range forms the eastern boundary. Before the former commercial farming area was bought by a well-known Windhoek business man in 1984, it was mercilessly exploited. The wounds have healed well. Today you encounter large herds of Springbok again, as well as numerous Oryx and Ostriches. Activities on offer include drives and hot air balloon trips, as well as guided hiking tours of several days ('Tok Tokkie Trails'), which like nothing else, provide an understanding of the desert's fauna and flora.

### Namib Naukluft Park

Sand and stones, sun and mirages, blue sky – or stars as far as you can see. Tiny beetles like the Tok Tokkie which collects its supply of moisture by fog-basking. Antelope like the Oryx whose body can heat up to temperatures which no other living being would be able to survive. Plants like the Welwitschia, some of which are already several hundred years old and still growing. The desert – so vast, so isolated, so inhospitable but nevertheless so diverse, so colourful and so much alive.



Oryx

Namib Naukluft Park is the largest nature conservation area in Africa, extending between the tarred road Aus-Lüderitz in the south and the Swakop River in the north, and from the Atlantic coast in the west to the highland in the east.

Due to low rainfall the park basically consists of desert – whatever shape it may ultimately take. Visitors have access to four sections of the park: the dunes of Sossusvlei in the so-called Dune Namib, the Naukluft Mountains, the gravel plains of the Namib between the seasonal Swakop and Kuiseb Rivers, as well as the dune area on the Atlantic coast around the lagoon at Sandwich Harbour. Furthermore, some parts of the park – the dune belt of the Koichab River north of Aus for example – can be accessed through tour operators who hold a concession.

### Sossusvlei

The entrance gate to the most famous part of the Dune Namib – and no doubt one of Namibia's most notable sights – is located at Sesriem. From there it is still another good hour's driving to Sossusvlei. 'Gathering place of water' the Nama called this place.



Sossusvlei

And indeed – amongst the high dunes of the enormous sand sea there is a clay pan, which was clearly formed by water. The pan only fills up once within several years, though, when there has been sufficient rain in the catchment area of the Tsauchab. Usually Sossusvlei is totally dry. The famous star dunes of Sossusvlei tower around the depression, offering thousands of themes to photographers – the most beautiful ones early in the morning and late in the afternoon when light and shadow create a more three-dimensional appearance of the landscape. Do not hesitate to climb a dune! Only from the top will you experience the sheer size of the dunes, and your effort will be rewarded with a spectacular view of the sand sea. At Sossusvlei you will come across sign boards showing the way to another two depressions which are well worth a visit: 'Dead Vlei', a dry pan with lumps of clay and dead camelthorn, and secluded little-known 'Nara Vlei'.

## Sesriem Canyon

In the vicinity of the park entrance to Sossusvlei the Tsauchab River has dug a cleft - about two kilometres long and up to 30 metres deep - into the deposits of sand and pebbles which are roughly 15 million years old. The name 'ses rieme' means that in earlier years 'six thongs' from an ox-wagon team had to be knotted together to lower a pail into the water of the gorge.



Sesriem Canyon

There is water only after sufficient rains in the Tsauchab's catchment area. Then, however, you can even take a bath in the muddy pools.

## Solitaire

Formerly a farm, Solitaire is situated in a vast, mostly barren landscape in the middle of nowhere. Until a few years ago this place basically consisted of a petrol station with a garage, and a shop with awnings under which you could have a cup of coffee while watching the attendant operate the manual petrol pump. Since a lodge was built Solitaire has lost some of its 'outpost' flair, but one of the most important things in a traveller's life has remained: the absolutely delicious apple crumble, made according to an old family recipe by manager Percy Cross, dubbed the 'Moose'.

## Büllsport

This is a guest farm with a public petrol station and a typical little farm store. It stocks a lot of such things which rural hearts desire. Büllsport is situated at the edge of one of Namibia's best-known hiking areas, the Naukluft Mountains.

## Naukluft Mountains

The Naukluft massif is part of the Namib Naukluft Park. Starting with the acquisition of farm Naukluft in 1966, the area gradually came under protection. Approaching the massif from the west, it becomes clearly visible that the bluish mountains form a line with the escarpment between the highland



Naukluft Mountains

plateau and the Namib Desert. There the terrain drops steeply over up to 1,000 metres. As the mountains consist mainly of dolomite rock and limestone, a huge subterranean drainage and cavity system was formed through the process of karstification. Rainwater gathering in the cavities emerges from the mountains in the shape of numerous springs and waterfalls, especially along the riverbeds. The water sustains a diverse fauna and flora which in the difficult terrain was able to develop almost undisturbed.

The mountain world of the Naukluft can be explored on two different one-day hiking tours or on the well-known 'Naukluft Hiking Trail' which covers about 120 km, but can also be shortened to 55 km. This trail is regarded as one of the most challenging in southern Africa, and it is only suitable for experienced hikers. There is also a taxing 4x4 route.

## Skeleton Coast

The stark beauty of this stretch of coast is something only to be seen as few visitors find the words to deliver an adequate description of their experience. The name dates back to the early 1930's when the publisher of a South West Annual, Mr. Sam Davis, stated in an article concerned with



Shipwreck

missing plane of a local celebrity, that "his bones will forever lay on the coast of skeletons, referring to the many wrecks found on the coast, hence the name stuck. The Skeleton Coast boasts a fascinating history and one will deeply appreciate the solitude and unpredictable weather when accompanied by a local of the region that can take you into past events and the means of survival that living things in the area have adapted.

Least accessible to the general public is Mowe Bay where the last of park officials are situated - the area north of this point is only accessible through scheduled tours undertaken by the organisation that holds the concession rights. At present, this concession is held by Wilderness Safaris, who offer a complete fly-in package. The park is highly sensitive environmentally and strict measures are taken against trespasser.

The area south of Mowe Bay includes Terrace and Torra Bay, both of which are managed by Namibia Wildlife Resorts. Terrace Bay offers limited accommodation, while Torra Bay is a camping area that is mostly frequented during the holiday season in December, when it attracts many local angling enthusiasts. Basic services are available along the main coastal road including fuel. However, distances between locations are vast and caution must be taken not to travel without water and basic necessities such as warm clothing. The main road is acceptable for all types of vehicles until Terrace Bay, but this is a salt/gravel road and caution should be exercised. It is

important that visitors to the area remain on main roads and refrain from off-road driving as this causes extreme environmental damage.

Along the southern part of the region, many private operators and lodgings operate and provide excellent packages for the traveller to experience the essence of the Skeleton Coast, with activities available ranging from angling and birding amongst others. Seal colonies are a great attraction and a worthwhile expedition to undertake.



## NAMIBIA - National Parks

### Etosha National Park

Etosha National Park is one of the world's pre-eminent wildlife areas.

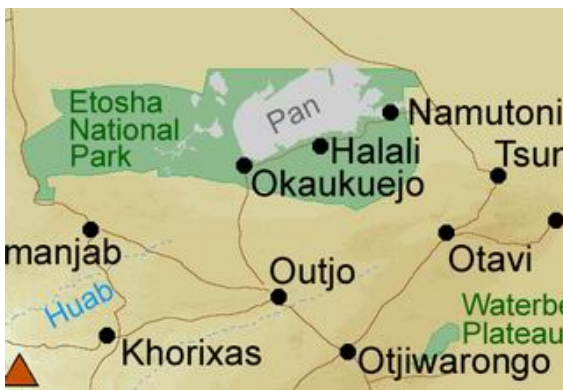
Etosha was proclaimed as Namibia's first conservation area in 1907. With subsequent additions it became the largest game reserve in the world, covering a vast area of 93,240 km<sup>2</sup>. For political considerations its size was progressively diminished, until by 1975 it had been reduced to its present surface area of 22,270 km<sup>2</sup>. It is still one of the largest game reserves in Africa!

A vast area on Namibia's central plateau, the park's focal point is the Etosha Pan - a flat saline desert, 130 km long by 50km at it's widest in the eastern sector of the park.

The Pan itself is believed to have originated over 12 million years ago as a shallow lake fed by the Kunene River. Subsequent climatic and tectonic changes have since lowered the water level so that the pan only holds water for a brief period each year - it teems with flamingos and pelicans in the summer. The saline and mineral residues together with moisture from perennial springs attract an immense number and variety of game and birds from mid March into November just before the new wet season starts.

Of the 114 mammals species found in the park, several are rare and endangered, such as black rhino, cheetah and black-faced impala. The latter is endemic to north-western Namibia and south-western Angola. Etosha's current population of more than 600 black rhino represents one of the few growing populations of black rhino in the world.

Other large mammals in the park include giraffe, blue wildebeest, mountain and plains zebra, hyena and lion. Cheetah and leopard complete the trio of 'big cats'. Antelope species range from kudu, gemsbok and the large and stately eland, to the diminutive Damara dik-dik. Smaller mammals include jackal, bat-eared fox, honey badger, warthog and the ubiquitous ground squirrel,



## Skeleton Coast National Park

The Skeleton Coast Park was proclaimed in its present form in 1973 and extends from the Kunene River in the north for some 500km to the Ugab River in the south, its total area being approximately 16,400 sq km.

The attraction of this remote area lies in the untouched landscapes of windswept dunes, rugged canyon walls and extensive mountain ranges. Its aura of mystery and mightiness is largely due to the dense coastal fog and cold sea breezes caused by the cold Benguela Ocean current from the Arctic, and bones scattered on its beaches from where the park's name derives.

The landscape in the park ranges from sweeping vistas of wind swept dunes to rugged canyons with walls of richly coloured volcanic rock and extensive mountain ranges. Its level coastline characterises the park, only occasionally broken by scattered rocky outcrops. The southern section consists of the gravel plains, but north of Terrace Bay high dunes occur in the immediate vicinity of the coast.

The remains of shipwrecks scattered along the coast bear witness to many ships, which have come to grief along these desolate shores.

The Ugab River is its southern boundary, and the park stretches north to the Kunene River. The park covers over 1.6 million hectares and divided into two zones - the southern section, between Ugab and Hoanib rivers, and the northern section - between the Hoanib and Kunene rivers. The latter has been demarcated as wilderness area and tourists can only enter the area by means of exclusive fly-in safaris conducted by a concessionaire. Of special interest are the "Clay Castles" of the Hoarusib, the salt pans near the Agate Mountain and one of the largest seal colonies in the world at Cape Fria.

The vegetation between the Ugab and Huab rivers falls within the Central Namib type, while that of north of the Huab is classified as Northern Namib. The vegetation is relatively spare, the most common species being dollar bush, brakspekbos and the occasional stands of ganna.

Most of the plant and insect species depends for their moisture on the thick fog that envelopes the coast and hinterland, and in the northern edges of the wilderness, where there are rivers of sorts as well as underground water, birds and animals manage to survive and even flourish.

Mammals along the coast are mainly limited to black-backed jackal, brown hyena and the Cape fur seals. Unusual inhabitants like the coastal lion had been seen, uniquely adapted to utilize coastal resources. The lions did not inhabit the coast permanently but used the river courses that cut through the Namib to move between the coast and the interior.

Far more prolific is the bird life occurring along the coast. As a result of the nutrient-rich ocean off the Skeleton Coast Park, large numbers of sea and shore birds are attracted.

Adjoining the northern section of the Skeleton Coasts Park is Kaokoland inhabited by the Himba people, who still live according to ancient customs and traditions and to the southern section of the park is Damaraland, inhabited by the Damara people, who have adopted western lifestyles.

**ACCESSIBILITY:**

The southern section of the park is accessible to the general public and attracts anglers to its superb fishing grounds. Because of the ecological sensitivity of the area, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism manages it. This park was opened for the through-travel in October 1998 and travellers must be in possession of the necessary permit which can be obtained from the Ministry's Reservation office in Windhoek or its Information office in Swakopmund. The park can be entered at Ugabmund and Springbokwasser checkpoints. The Northern section of the Park is a tourism concession and restricted to fly-in safaris only - (Please see our Namibia Fly-In Safari section)

**Ai-Ais Hot Springs**

(Season: Open between – 2nd Friday in March to 31 October)

Ai-Ais, meaning Burning Water in the local language, refers to the sulphurous hot water springs which well from the earth. This is the ideal place for sightseeing, backpacking or even angling.

Accommodation:

Visitors have a choice of accommodation:

Luxury flats containing a double and two single beds, a kitchen with refrigerator, kettle and hot plate, and a bathroom with a bath, shower, basin and toilet.

There is a built-in fireplace on the balcony overlooking the Fish River.

