

## THE BEST OF NAMIBIA - self drive tour

### Day 1 – Windhoek

Welcome to Namibia, "the land of the wide open spaces". Today is the first day of what could become one of the most exciting holidays of your life. Upon your arrival at the Hosea Kutako International Airport you collect your rental vehicle and travel the short distance to Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. The rest of the day is at leisure to relax after your long flight, or to explore the city on your own. The ideal way to explore Windhoek is on foot.

### Day 2 – Mariental

Today you leave Windhoek behind you and start your Namibian self-drive adventure. You travel due south along the B2 main road passing the towns of Rehoboth and Kalkrand along the way.

Your destination today is the **Gondwana Kalahari Park**, situated some 30km northeast of the town of Mariental, right in the middle of the Kalahari Desert, the world's largest continuous stretch of sand.



Namibia's Southern Kalahari is more than a destination; it is an exploration in which the traveller discovers ancient Africa, fascinating animals and a rich history driven by

people who were hardened by the sun and the will to survive. The night is spent at the Kalahari Anib Lodge, and guests can go on self-guided hiking excursions in the park or join scenic drives. There is a sparkling swimming pool at the lodge, and a typical Namibian dinner can be enjoyed in the restaurant.

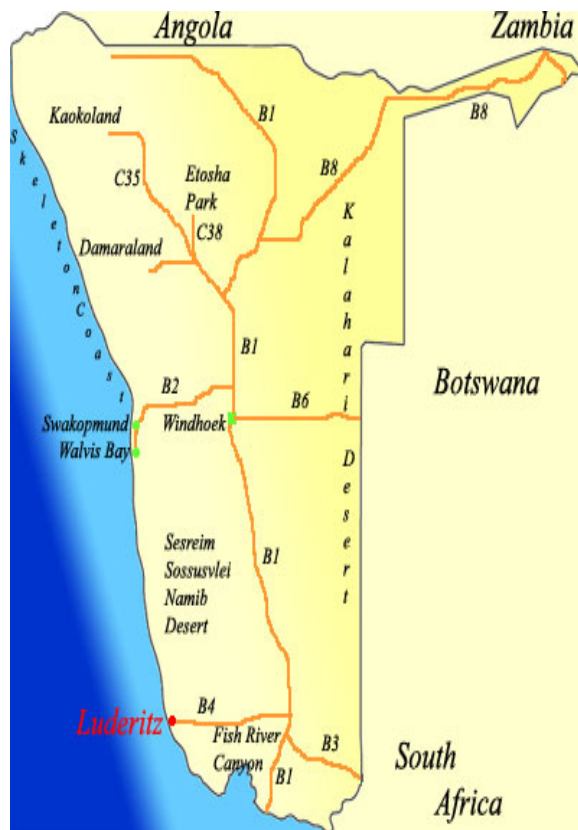
### Days 3 & 4 – Fish River Canyon

Travel south to the magnificent Fish River Canyon, at 160km long and up to 550m deep the 2nd largest canyon in the world. You have the rest of the afternoon and a full day tomorrow to explore the area and visit one or more of the viewpoints that look out over the rugged and breathtaking canyon landscape. The Fish River Canyon was formed when the plates of the African continent split, and was gradually deepened by the flow of water over the course of hundreds of millions of years. Today, in the midst of rugged plains and mountains, travellers can look down into its depths and see the geological history of Namibia written in its layers.



### Days 5 & 6 – Lüderitz

North and then west to the town of Lüderitz, on the cold Atlantic coast. The port of Lüderitz is one of the most historical and fascinating towns in Namibia, and a picturesque destination in its own right. It was the first German possession in the territory, the town from which the diamond rush began, and the site of one of Namibia's darkest secrets (see below). In 1488, the small bay, now known as Lüderitz, received its first visitor, Bartholomew Diaz, who marked his visit with a stone cross. Almost 400 years later, the bay and the territory surrounding it was purchased by Adolf Lüderitz. He placed it under the protection of the German government and, not recognising the wealth that lay on the sands, later sold it to a trading company. On 14 April 1908, a worker on the railway line, Zacharias Lewala, first stumbled across diamonds in the sand, and Lüderitz was placed on the international map. Today the town offers visitors a glimpse of Namibia's colonial history, and a base from which to explore the well known ghost town of Kolmanskop and the Sperrgebiet.



**Day 7 – Tiras Mountains**



Back inland as far as Aus and then north into the forbidding semi-desert interior of southern Namibia. Namtib is a privately owned biosphere reserve covering an area of 16 400 hectares situated at the edge of the Namib Desert in the Tiras Mountains. Farming and human activities are adapted to suit the arid climate prevailing in southern Namibia. The fascinating landscape of the farm offers an abundance of breathtaking views and hosts a wealth of

fauna and flora.

**Days 8 & 9 – Sossusvlei**

Further north into the harsh & forbidding Namib desert, the oldest desert in the world. Sossusvlei, situated right on the edge of the sand sea of the Namib Desert, allows travellers to experience the contrasts of life in the harsh desert environment. You have a full day to explore this fascinating area.



A visit to the dunes just after sunrise provides the opportunity to watch the sunlight unfold over the desert from the crest of Dune 45, unveiling red dunes marching off into the distance. As the sun rises higher, the dunes change colour, revealing pastel hues that are so beloved by photographers. The dead camelthorn trees of Hidden Vlei and Dead Vlei make magnificent photos, casting jagged silhouettes against the velvet textures of sand.



And in certain years, when the rains have been good, there may be a magical opportunity to see water amidst the dunes. Sossusvlei is also a place of life, with opportunities to see desert adaptations that the desert requires. Oryx survive at temperatures that kill other mammals, dune lizards perform a dance to cool down their feet, and the head-standing 'tok-tokkie' beetle drinks condensation that runs down its back towards its mouth. But perhaps the greatest magic of Sossusvlei is the opportunity to experience its timelessness, solitude and silence.

### **Days 10 & 11 - Swakopmund**

Through the barren semi-desert landscape to the cold Atlantic Ocean and Swakopmund, a perennial Namibian favourite, a place to which travellers happily return. Swakopmund's appeal lies in the contrast of a small but



sophisticated coastal resort, with old German architecture predominating, set amongst the harsh dunes of the Namib Desert. You have a full day to explore this beautiful coastal town and its interesting surrounds on your own.

A popular excursion in the area is the

The Welwitschia Drive, a half-day, self-drive circuit of the Namib Naukluft Park in the vicinity of Swakopmund. Travellers can view the gravel plains of the Namib, the awe-inspiring "moon landscape", the "living fossil" Welwitschia mirabilis plant and a number of sites of historical interest. A permit to enter the Namib Naukluft Park is required, please enquire at your guest lodge. Activities in and around the town include quad-biking, sand-boarding, boat trips and fishing excursions.



The day could also be set aside for a visit the seal colony at Cape Cross, about 120km north of Swakopmund along the barren Atlantic Coast. A trip to Cape Cross is not just an opportunity to see Namibia's largest seal colony,

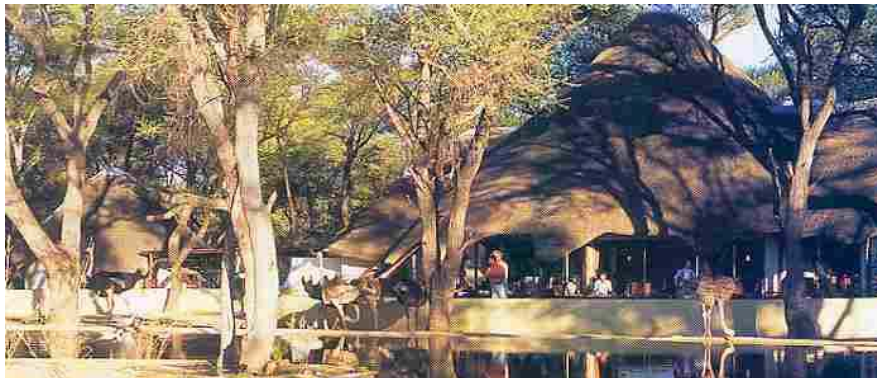


with between 80,000 and 100,000 seals. It is also a journey through history. Diego Cao first landed here in 1482, perhaps attracted by the wild beauty of the area, and erected a cross to commemorate his visit, a replica of which can still be seen at this wild and desolate place.

### **Day 12 – Omaruru**

Today you leave Swakopmund behind you and travel inland on the B2 towards Okahandja. Near the town of Usakos you will see the well known Spitzkoppe mountains in the distance. Time permitting, these are well worth a visit. The area was once the home of some of the original inhabitants of Namibia, the San Bushmen, and traces of their lives can still be seen at Bushman's Paradise, where rock art remains to record the animals they saw. Today, the Spitzkoppe is home to a thriving rural community who offer mineral samples, trips to see Bushman's paradise and rides on traditional donkey carts. For skilled climbers, Spitzkoppe, affectionately known as "The Matterhorn of Namibia" offers challenging sport climbs. For the less skilled, but equally adventurous, there is the opportunity to go bouldering, climbing the easier rocks and boulders, to admire the beautiful views of the surrounding Namib Desert.

Your destination today is the Erongo Wilderness Lodge, nestled amid the granite formations of the Erongo Mountains, a spectacular location in the heart of a country renowned for its scenic beauty. The lodge is a founder member of The Erongo Mountain Nature Conservancy, joining 30 private landowners in a collective effort to conserve and protect this natural treasure of over 200 000ha in extent. The Conservancy's mission includes the preservation of the rich cultural heritage in the form of rock paintings and engravings that are found throughout the area, such as the rock art site near Erongo Wilderness Lodge.



### **Day 13 – Khorixas**

Via Omaruru and Uis to a beautiful lodge located right next to the impressive Ugab Rock Monolith, a 35 m high "finger of rock", the result of millions of years wind and water erosion. West of Khorixas lies the fascinating Twyfelfontein conservancy, and, time permitting, you could also explore this area. A guided tour of the Twyfelfontein rock art site offers travellers a glimpse of the historical record of the people who roamed this valley thousands of years ago. Habitation of the Twyfelfontein site has been dated to 6,000 years ago, and some of the rock art is recognised to be about 10,000 years old. A visit to the rock art site entails a guided walking tour, during which the traveller sees signs of stone age habitation, rock engravings and rock paintings. Just a few kilometres further, the traveller has the opportunity to touch and walk among the remnants of ancient geological history at Burnt Mountain and The Organ Pipes. And a short drive from Twyfelfontein, the traveller can see a record of ancient natural history at the Petrified Forest. The area is also characterised by a remarkable scenic beauty, in the form of red rocks and plateaus, that turn the colour of volcanic fire with the setting of the sun.



### **Day 14 – Etosha National Park**

East via Outjo, and then north to the famous Etosha National Park. Once inside the Park, excitement will mount as you start seeing some of the numerous animals that inhabit this magnificent wildlife sanctuary. Accommodation tonight is in comfortable en-suite rooms or chalets in the newly renovated Okaukuejo Restcamp. Facilities include a restaurant, bar, shop, swimming pool and kiosk.

The main attraction of Okaukuejo is that it overlooks a permanent waterhole which is floodlit at night. Here a wide diversity of wildlife congregates and interacts. The spectacle starts at dawn, with animals coming in large numbers to quench their thirst, with the activity continuing throughout the day and deep into the night. It is not impossible to see rhino, elephant and lion drinking at the waterhole during a single evening.

### **Day 15 – Etosha National Park**

You travel east inside the Park to the centrally located Halali Restcamp, more or less halfway between Okaukuejo and Namutoni. Etosha National Park, ‘the place of dry water’ is one of Africa’s best-known, parks and is regularly featured on television channels such as National Geographic, Animal Planet and Discovery. The reason for Etosha National Park’s popularity is the fact that



you have an opportunity to see some of the 114 mammal species and approximately 340 bird species congregating at waterholes in their natural environment, untroubled by man. The Etosha Pan, a vast 5,000 square km salt pan that dries out during summer, is an additional ‘must-be-seen’ feature of the 22,270 square km park.

### **Day 16 – Etosha National Park Border**

Still further east inside the Park, game-viewing as you go. En-route you can visit the Namutoni Restcamp, built around a historic German fort. Namutoni is located in the eastern side of Etosha National Park. It centers on an old German Fort, overlooking the King Nehale waterhole.



The Fort is being developed into the hub of activity, offering two restaurants, a relaxation lounge, a bar, crafts boutique, curio shop, jewellers and bookstore. The Fort area is for pedestrian access only, and an elevated decked walkway along the water-hole facing

wall will provide opportunities for enjoying the surrounding scenery, wildlife and the spectacular sunsets. Your accommodation tonight is at a beautiful lodge just a few minutes drive outside the eastern gate of the Park.

### **Day 17 – Waterberg Plateau Park**

South through the typical Namibian towns of Tsumeb, Otavi and Otjiwarongo to the Waterberg Plateau Park. Rising up out of the flat African savannahs, the cliffs of the Waterberg Plateau form a rock island refuge for endangered species and the memory of forgotten times. Once a battleground, the Waterberg is now a sanctuary for rare and endangered species such as the white rhino, roan and sable antelope, and the vulnerable Cape vulture. With easy walking trails and guided game drives to search for endangered species, a visit to the Waterberg brings travellers into contact with Africa, in a way that few other destinations can. Accommodation tonight is at the Bernabe de la Bat Rest Camp. Nestling amongst indigenous vegetation, this delightful rest camp was named after the first director of Namibia's Department of Nature Conservation. The camp was designed to blend with the surroundings, and during construction as little as possible of the natural vegetation was disturbed. In addition, the reddish brown sandstone bricks of the buildings and their copper-coloured roofs echo the colour and texture of the cliffs overlooking the rest camp. Amenities include a swimming pool with a superb view of the cliffs, a restaurant, shop which stocks frozen meat, tinned goods and curios, and a filling station



### **Day 18 – End of tour**

Today you tackle the last leg of your Namibian adventure. On the way back to Windhoek you can stop at the town of Okahandja. One of Namibia's first towns, Okahandja has seen many battles between the Hereros, the Namas and the Germans. The sites are marked by monuments and memories.

Yet today it is a peaceful town, quietly civilised, known for the excellence of its bakeries, and as the home of two of Namibia's largest craft markets. In the late afternoon you arrive back in Windhoek where your rental vehicle is handed back for the end of your tour.