



**NAMIBIA SAFARI ITINERARY**  
**July 11 -26, 2018**  
**16 Days and 15 Overnights**

**Day 1 Arrival in Windhoek**

After arriving at Namibia's International Airport, about 40 km outside of Windhoek, you will be welcomed by your guide who will transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is at your leisure although you certainly have the option of checking out Windhoek and its shops. You will meet your fellow travelers and naturalist guide at a Welcome Dinner in the evening.

*Windhoek Capital City:* Windhoek, Namibia's capital nestles among rolling hills, bounded by mountains in the east, and to the south and the Khomas Hochland in the west. It is a meeting place between Africa and Europe, the modern and the old. In the capital's main street, well-preserved German colonial buildings are in sharp contrast with modern architectural styles, while Herero women in traditional dress mingle with executives dressed in the latest fashions.

**Overnight: Windhoek (D)**

**Day 2 Windhoek**

After a leisurely breakfast you'll explore Namibia's capital city of Windhoek. A small city, its architecture combines modern cosmopolitan influences with German colonial buildings. You'll take in some of the city's highlights such as the National Museum of Namibia, The Independence Museum and Monument, the Namibian Parliament House, some Lutheran Churches and the Old Fortress (the Alte Feste) with its historical artifacts and colonization story. Lunch will be a restaurant downtown with time in the afternoon to visit the Old Breweries Building home to the Namibia Craft Centre, the country's biggest hub for arts and crafts.

**Overnight: Windhoek (B L D)**

**Day 3 Windhoek to Okonjima, AfriCat Foundation**

This morning your safari begins as you head out for Okonjima. Home to the highly respected AfriCat Foundation, a wildlife sanctuary founded in 1991, it is dedicated to supporting animal welfare and preserving their habitat. You will experience a safari highlight in the evening when you track leopards. Although leopards are very elusive, as some of these animals are equipped with radio collars, the probability of a breath-taking close sighting is greatly increased.

*AfriCat Foundation:* Dedicated to creating conservation awareness, preserving habitat, promoting environmental educational research and supporting animal welfare, the AfriCat Foundation's main focus has been Africa's big cats, especially injured or captured leopard and cheetah. It runs the largest cheetah and leopard rescue and release program in the world and in the last 17 years over 1,000 of these predators have been rescued with over 85% being released. More recently, AfriCat has become more devoted to continuing research on big cat rehabilitation as well as the human-wildlife conflict that can occur as a result.

**Overnight: Okonjima (B L D)**

**Day 4 Okonjima, AfriCat Foundation**

Today you experience another memorable activity – notably tracking cheetahs on foot. This is an experience of a lifetime and surprisingly, not at all scary. You will return for a sumptuous breakfast/brunch. Later in the day you'll have the opportunity to visit the cheetah welfare project and in the evening you'll visit a night hide where nocturnal animals such as porcupine, caracal, honey badger and even leopard may be seen. You will also have time in between these activities to relax and enjoy your private chalet, lounging by the pool amidst your idyllic bush surroundings.

**Overnight: Okonjima (B L D)**

**Day 5 Okonjima to Ongava Reserve**

It's another early start to the day for a morning guided activity, returning to Bush Camp for breakfast/brunch. In the late morning you'll depart for Ongava Game Reserve -heading out in the afternoon for a game drive within the private Reserve. Ongava has a healthy population of wildlife including rhinos and lions. In the evening you will dine under the stars with an exclusive view of wildlife congregating at the waterhole below.

**Overnight: Ongava (B L D)**

## **Day 6 Etosha National Park**

Today is a full day of heart-pounding game viewing within the Etosha National Park. Etosha boasts some 114 mammal and over 340 bird species. You will have the opportunity to view elephants, lions, giraffes, blue wildebeests, elands, kudus, gemsboks, zebras, rhinos, cheetahs, leopards, hyenas, honey-badgers, warthogs and black-face impalas. And the best part – frequently your vehicle is the only one in the vicinity so you truly feel like you are an explorer.

*Etosha National Park:* Etosha National Park covers over 13,000 miles of which approximately 3,000 miles are made up of saline depressions or ‘pans’. The largest of these pans, the Etosha Pan, can be classified as a saline desert in its own right. The Etosha Pan lies in the Owambo Basin, on the north-western edge of the Namibian Kalahari Desert. Until three million years ago it formed part of huge, shallow lake that was reduced to a complex of salt pans when the major river that fed it, the Kunene, changed course and began to flow to the Atlantic instead. If the lake existed today, it would be the third largest in the world. Etosha is the largest pan.

**Overnight: Ongava (B L D)**

## **Day 7 Etosha National Park to Palmwag Concession**

This morning you depart for Damaraland, to make your way to a remote and authentic Himba village, spending time with these friendly and fascinating people and learning about their truly unique culture. You’ll have a picnic lunch before continuing on to the Palmwag Concession.

*The Himba:* The Himba people inhabit Namibia’s remote north-western Kunene Region. Basically Herero in terms of origin, language and culture, they are semi-nomadic pastoralists who travel from one watering place to another. They seldom leave their home areas and continue to adhere to their cultural traditions. They have lived in relative isolation for centuries with modern society having minimal impact on their lives.

They are a tall, slender and statuesque people, characterized 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 of Kaokoland are simple, cone-shaped structures of saplings, bound together with palm leaves and plastered with mud and dung. The men build the structures, while the women mix the clay and do the plastering. A fire burns in the headman’s hut day and night, to keep away insects and provide light and heating. A family may move from one home to another several times a year to seek grazing for their goats and cattle.

A Himba woman spends as much as three hours a day on her appearance. First she bathes, then she anoints herself with her own individually prepared mixture which not only protects her skin from the harsh desert sun, but also keeps insects away and prevents her hair from falling out. She uses another mixture of butter fat, fresh herbs and black coals to rub on her hair, and ‘steams’ her clothes regularly over the permanent fire. Men, women and children adorn themselves with necklaces, bracelets, anklets and belts made from iron and shell beads. With their unusual and striking designs, these items have gained a commercial value and are being produced on a small scale for the urban market..

**Overnight: Palmwag Concession (B L D)**

## **Day 8 Palmwag Concession**

Today you will spend a thrilling and memorable morning tracking rhinos on foot. It requires a very early start to the day, although your trackers departed 2 hours earlier. You’ll follow their route by vehicle until you are within close proximity to a rhino, at which point you walk and find a suitable vantage point -truly an incredible experience. You’ll enjoy a picnic lunch and an opportunity to learn more about rhino conservation from your trackers before returning to the lodge. Later in the afternoon you head out again for a scenic nature drive or walk to explore this vast and astounding ecosystem.

*The Palmwag Concession:* A private refuge, The Palmwag Concession provides for some of the continent’s most unique wildlife such as the legendary desert elephant, lion and the last free-roaming black rhino population on earth. In fact seventy-five per cent of Namibia’s endemic species inhabit this last bastion of the wilderness.

*Desert Black Rhinoceros:* Namibia is home to the larger of two subspecies of the black rhinoceros found in southern Africa. The only population that remains in the wild, unfenced and outside reserves occupies an arid range in the western Kaokoveld. Their preferred habitat is the mountainous escarpment, but they follow ephemeral rivers into the northern Namib as well, especially when conditions are favorable after rains. They are the only black rhinoceros in Africa that are internationally recognized as a “desert group.” Like desert adapted elephants, they cover great distances. They walk and feed at night and rest during the day. To meet their nutritional and bulk requirements they browse on no fewer than 74 of the 103 plant species that grow in their range. One of the few animals to eat fibrous Welwitschia leaves, they even feed

heavily on the milkbush with its sharp spines and toxic latex, presumably because of the high water and fat content. Once widespread in the subcontinent, black rhinoceros are an endangered species.

**Overnight: Palmwag Concession (B L D)**

## **Day 9 Palmwag to Damaraland**

After an early breakfast you depart the Palmwag Concession and make your way along the ephemeral rivers of Damaraland to explore this remarkable region and to search for game, including the elusive desert adapted elephants if they are in the area. Lunch will be at a scenic location, and you will arrive at your Camp in the late afternoon.

If time allows your guide will take you to visit the nearby attractions and geological sites of Twyfelfontein rock engravings (recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Burnt Mountain and the Organ Pipes – if not there is plenty of time to do so tomorrow.

*Twyfelfontein:* Strewn over a hillside among flat-topped mountains of red sandstone, Twyfelfontein's boulders and slabs of red sandstone hold some 2,500 prehistoric engravings that depict wildlife, animal spoor and abstract motifs. It is perhaps the largest and finest collection of petroglyphs in Africa. The engravings show animals such as elephant, giraffe, kudu, lion, rhinoceros, springbok, zebra and ostrich that once used to drink from a fountain at the bottom of the hill. In some cases footprints were engraved instead of hooves or paws. The abstract motifs feature mainly circles. Stone tools and other artifacts found at Twyfelfontein suggest that hunter-gatherers occupied the site over a period perhaps 7,000 years ago. A local guide will accompany us to showcase the rock art. The engravings lie along two circular routes, one an hour's climb and the other 40 minutes longer. Twyfelfontein is one of Namibia's key National Monuments.

*Organ Pipes:* The Organ Pipes are another geological curiosity in the area consisting of a mass of perpendicular dolerite columns that intruded the surrounding rocks also about 125 million years ago and have since been exposed in a ravine due to river erosion.

**Overnight: Damaraland (B L D)**

## **Day 10 Damaraland**

After an early breakfast you will explore the ephemeral Aba Huab River and search for game, especially the elusive desert adapted elephants. Damaraland is home to a variety of desert adapted wildlife and hidden desert treasures. Returning to Camp for lunch, in the afternoon, you may visit Twyfelfontein and other nearby attractions if we haven't already done so, or relax and enjoy some well-deserved leisure time.

*Desert Adapted Elephant:* African elephant in a desert? Well, yes, and not only elephant, but other large mammals as well, such as black rhinoceros and giraffe. Desert adapted elephant in Kaokoland and the Namib walk further for water and fodder than any other elephant in Africa. The distances between waterholes and feeding grounds can be as great as 43 miles. The typical home range of a family herd is larger than 1,250 miles, or eight times as big as ranges in central Africa where rainfall is much higher. They walk and feed at night and rest during the day. To meet their nutritional and bulk requirements they browse on no fewer than 74 of the 103 plant species that grow in their range. Not a separate species or even a subspecies, they are an ecotype unique to Namibia in Africa south of the equator, behaviorally adapted to hyper-arid conditions. Elephants in Mali on the southwestern fringe of the Sahara Desert are the only others known to survive in similar conditions.

**Overnight: Damaraland (B L D)**

## **Day 11 Damaraland to Swakopmund**

Today you depart for the charming, ornate town of Swakopmund on the coast of the Atlantic and situated in the Namib Desert. Colonized by Germans, it is replete with colonial German architecture. On route you will stop for lunch and pass Namibia's highest mountain, the Brandberg, arriving in Swakopmund in the mid-afternoon. Your hotel is located right in the center of town offering the opportunity to walk the palm-lined streets and shop in the boutiques for high quality craft goods and gems – meeting up in time for dinner at one of the famous local restaurants specializing in fresh seafood.

Swakopmund is a town with an air of enchantment about it, as if the ornate buildings of the old quarter and the lush greenery of the seafront were somehow spirited away from their proper setting, only to be left without rhyme or reason in an African desert. Beyond the last row of houses the desert is devoid of vegetation except for low bushes. On a slight rise above the seashore, the town is exposed to both the Atlantic and the Namib, a gravel plain to the north and east. A bare plain beside a rough sea and dry river is hardly a prime position for a holiday resort. In fact the town was never meant to be a resort, but became one against all the odds. It was established as a harbor town and had its beginning as a landing station in 1892 when the German Imperial Navy erected beacons on the site. Initially cargo and passengers were rowed ashore in

surfboats from steamers anchored offshore. Once a concrete Mole or breakwater had been built it became possible to use tugs and barges instead.

**Overnight: Swakopmund (B L D)**

## **Day 12 Swakopmund**

After an early breakfast you will head out for Walvis Bay, where you will spend the morning kayaking on the Atlantic Ocean amongst seals and dolphins. This is an exhilarating activity as there are countless curious baby seals that insist on attempting to nibble on the oars. After a light lunch, you may visit the Walvis Bay Lagoon, where you should be treated to some good birdlife, before returning to Swakopmund. The afternoon is at leisure (more shopping for those who love to shop), before heading out for dinner at a local restaurant.

**Overnight: Swakopmund (B L D)**

## **Day 13 Swakopmund to Sossusvlei**

The awesome and ever-changing desert landscapes of the Namib Desert are eye candy for you today as you drive through Namib Naukluft National Park. You will visit the prehistoric Welwitschia plants and the fascinating moon landscape and have a picnic lunch along the way. Time permitting, you'll visit the Sesriem Canyon a geological attraction near your Desert Lodge.

**Overnight: Namib (B L D)**

## **Day 14 Sossusvlei**

This morning you rise early for a magical excursion to capture the massive red dunes of Sossusvlei while the light is soft and shadows accentuate their towering shapes and curves. This area boasts some of the highest free-standing sand dunes in the world. Your guide will provide insight on the formation of the Desert and its myriad of fascinating creatures and plants that have adapted to survive these harsh environs. Once you have explored to our heart's content we can enjoy a relaxing picnic breakfast under the shade of a camel thorn tree and return to your lodge for a late lunch, stopping off to view Sesriem Canyon en route if this wasn't done the previous day. The rest of the day is at your leisure.

*Sossusvlei:* This most frequently visited section of the massive Namib Naukluft National Park has become known as Sossusvlei, famous for its towering apricot colored sand dunes. Sossusvlei itself is actually a clay pan set amidst these star shaped dunes which stand up to 185 feet above the surrounding plains, ranking them among the tallest dunes on earth. The deathly white clay pan contrasts against the orange sands and forms the endpoint of the ephemeral Tsauchab River, within the interior of the Great Sand Sea. Until the encroaching dunes blocked its course around 60,000 years ago, the Tsauchab River once reached the sea- as ephemeral rivers still do in the northern half of the Namib.

Sossusvlei is the biggest of four pans in the vicinity. Another, famous for its gnarled and ghostly camel thorn trees, is Deadvlei which can be reached on foot over 1 km of sand. Deadvlei's striking camel thorn trees, dead for want of water, still stand erect as they once grew. They survived until about 900 years ago when the sand sea finally blocked the river from occasionally flooding the pan.

*Sesriem Canyon:* Sesriem Canyon has evolved through centuries of erosion by the Tsauchab River which has incised a narrow gorge into the surrounding area, exposing the varying layers of sedimentation deposited over millions of years. The shaded cool depths of the canyon allow pools of water to gather during the rainy season and remain for much of the year round. These pools were a vital source of water for early settlers who drew water for their livestock by knotting six (ses) lengths of rawhide thongs (riems) together, hence the canyon and surrounding area became known as Sesriem.

**Overnight: Namib (B L D)**

## **Day 15 Sossusvlei to Windhoek**

This morning, after breakfast you'll depart for Windhoek arriving in the late afternoon. The remainder of the day is at your leisure and this evening you will enjoy a Farewell dinner with your guides.

**Overnight Windhoek (B L D)**

## **Day 16 Departure for home or extension trips**

Depending on international flight schedules, you'll spend as much of the day as is available relaxing at the hotel or exploring town until it is time to be transferred to the Windhoek International Airport

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