

## Namibia Safari- A Bountiful Harvest Awaits the Adventure Traveler

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Namibia's top draw is the Etosha National Park, rated as one of Africa's finest game sanctuaries. Find out why this country of timeless deserts, thorn bush savanna, desolate wind ravaged coastlines, majestic canyons, and sun-baked saltpans is considered such a treat by experienced adventure travelers...



*Kalahari Desert*

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## **1. Namibia Safari - A Bountiful Harvest Awaits the Adventure Traveler**

Namibia is a largely arid country of stark rough-hewn beauty. The most vivid images are those of a haunting technicolor landscape of swirling orange dunes, shimmering mirages and treacherous dust devils. The apparent desolation is deceptive and plant and animal life and even man has adapted to this environment. The country is designed almost specially with the active and adventure seeker in mind. Timeless deserts, thorn bush savanna, desolate wind ravaged coastlines, majestic canyons, and sun-baked salt pans are the bounty that awaits the traveler.

Namibia's top draw is the Etosha National Park, rated as one of Africa's finest game sanctuaries. The birding experience in the country is truly superior. The range of activities you can indulge in the unsurpassable physical environment is truly impressive. Ballooning over the desert, skydiving over land and sea, paragliding, whitewater rafting and sand skiing along coastal dunes are good activities for starters. More fun games to pick from include abseiling – that most spectacular of rock sports, coastal and fresh water angling, desert camel riding, scuba diving, 4x4 desert runs, hiking and mountaineering.

Namibia has four distinct geographical regions. In the north is Etosha Pan, a great area for wildlife and heart of Etosha National Park. The slender Caprivi Strip is nested between Zambia and Botswana and is a wet area of woodland blessed with a few rivers. Along the coast is the Namib Desert, which at the age of 80 million years old, is said to be the world's oldest desert. At the coast, the icy cold Atlantic meets the blazing African desert, resulting in dense fogs. The well-watered central plateau runs north to south, and carries rugged mountains, magnificent canyons, rocky outcrops and expansive plains.

Namibia, one and half times the size of France, is very sparsely inhabited and carries only 1.8 million souls. The people are as unique as the land they live on. The most intriguing are the San, otherwise known as Bushmen. These most hardy of people have a highly advanced knowledge of their environment. It is a marvelous thing how well they are adapted to their difficult habitat. Just pause and think that these are the only people in the world who live with no permanent access to water. In the Kalahari Desert, one of their domiciles, surface water is not to be found. Tubers, melons, and other water bearing plants as well as underground siphon wells supply their water requirements.

In Namibia today, Bushmen number about 50,000. Historians estimate that they have lived, mostly as hunters and gatherers, for at least 25,000 years in these parts of the world. Bushmen speak in a peculiar click language and are very gifted in the arts of storytelling, mimicry, and dance. Namibia's other people, who are indigenous to the continent, are mostly of Bantu origin. They are thought to have arrived from western Africa from about 2,400 years ago. The African groups include the Owambo, Kavango, Caprivians, Herero, Himba, Damara, Nama and Tswana.

The Africans aside, other groups comprise about 15% of the population and have played an important role in the emergence of the modern nation. White Namibians amount to about 120,000 and are mainly of German and Afrikaner heritage. Germans arrived in significant numbers after 1884 when Bismarck declared the country a German Protectorate. Afrikaners, white farmers of Dutch origin, moved north from their Cape settlements, especially after the Dutch Cape Colony was ceded to the British in 1806. This strongly independent people, whose ancestors had lived in the Cape from 1652 resented British control.

Two other distinct groups complete the spectrum of Namibia's people - Basters and Coloureds. Coloured in Namibia and southern Africa refers to people of mixed racial heritage, black- white for example. They have a separate identity and culture. This makes sense considering that Namibia was run by South Africa after the First World War. Even in pre-Apartheid South Africa, racial classification was a fine art. The Afrikaans-speaking Basters, descended from Hottentot women and Dutch settlers of the Cape. Alienated from both white and black communities, they trekked northwards, finally founding their own town Rehoboth, in 1871. Baster is actually derived from "bastard", but it is not derogatory, and the Basters are indeed proud of it.

Namibia's barren and unwelcoming coastlines served as a natural deterrent to the ambitions of European explorers. That was until 1884 when the German merchant Adolf Luderitz established a permanent settlement between the Namib Desert and the Atlantic seaboard that afterwards took his name. Bismarck subsequently declared the territory covered by Namibia a German colony and named it Südwestafrika or South West Africa. As German settlers moved into the interior, conflict was inevitable with the inheritors of the land.

The German occupation was a particularly unhappy experience for the Herero. The Herero resented the German's harsh and racist rule and the effect of the encroachment on their lands on their livelihood and way of life. On the first day of the year 1904, the Herero led by Chief Samuel Maharero, rose suddenly and unexpectedly in arms against their colonial overlords. The Nama joined the insurrection and the authorities did not regain control even after six months of trying. Over 100 German settlers and soldiers died in the uprising. Historians

now consider events that followed to constitute the first genocide of the twentieth century.

Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha was furnished with a contingent of 14,000 soldiers and tasked to put down the rebellion. The governor general of the territory was then Rudolph Goering -the father of Herman Goering, Hitler's right hand man. Lothar von Trotha was a generation ahead of his time and his kind of thinking was to become government policy under the Third Reich. He argued that the Herero must be destroyed as a people and he did not wince at the murder of women or children. At the end of it all, 100,000 Nama and Herero were killed. The survivors were herded in concentration camps where unspeakable things happened. The Herero fared very badly and 80% of her people perished. The population of the Nama diminished by 35-50%.

Windhoek, the capital of 165,000 people is the only true city in the country. For those traveling to more remote regions, this is where you settle practical matters. The positive aspects of the German period can be seen in the charming style of older buildings in the city. Places of interest in the city include the State Museum, State Archives, and the Namibia Crafts Centre. The Dan Viljoen Game Park lies 24 Km west of Windhoek on the gentle hills of Khoma Hochland. In this resort you find ostriches, baboons, zebras and over 200 species of birds. The Waterburg Plateau Park, located 230 km from Windhoek is popular with weekenders. This extensive mountain wilderness is home to cheetah, leopard, kudu, giraffe, and white rhino.

Etosha National Park is what brings wildlife lovers to Namibia. The park is comparable in size and diversity of species with the best in Africa. The unusual terrain of Etosha holds savanna grassland, dense brush and woodland. But it is the Etosha Pan, a depression that sometimes holds water and covers 5,000 sq km, that is the heart of park. The perennial springs around the pan, attract many birds and land animals in the dry winter months. The effect of this background is magical and some of the best wildlife photographs have been taken here.

There are 144 mammal species in the park and elephants are particularly abundant. Some other interesting wildlife here includes giraffe, leopard, cheetah, jackal, blue wildebeest, gemsbok and black rhino. The birding is great at Etosha and over 300 bird species have been recorded. You will get best value by spending at least three days here. There are excellent accommodation facilities at the three rest camps of Namutoni, Halali and Okaukuejo. The best time to see animals is between May and September, when water draws them in huge numbers to the edge of the pan. Etosha is 400 km to the north of Windhoek by road.

The Fish River Canyon is unrivalled in Africa and only the Grand Canyon in the U.S in larger. The Canyon runs for 160 km and reaches a width of 27 km and depth of 550 m. But size alone does not explain the appeal of the canyon. You experience incredible views at various points along the rim. Adventure lovers do not merely come for the views. Hiking through the canyon is the ultimate endurance adventure for hikers. There is an established 90 km hiking trail that will take you 4-5 days to cover.

The trail ends at Ai-Ais hot spring resort where you can unwind. You are allowed to hike between early May and end of September. The hike is quite strenuous and needless to say, you must be physically fit. The authorities disbelieve the capacity of most people to undertake the hike and will actually insist on seeing a medical certificate of fitness before allowing you to start off. Fish River Canyon is 580 km to the south of Windhoek.

The Skeleton Coast has been the graveyard of seafarers and whales and deserves that morbid name. The problem is the dense fogs. And woe to the ship wreck survivor who expects respite onshore! Ahead is the Namib Desert, one of the driest and most unwelcoming places. Adventure travelers love trekking along the coastline as they enjoy the stark beauty of the area. To the south at Cape Cross, you find a seal colony carrying tens of thousands of seals. The Skeleton Coast Park covers 16,400 sq km and begins at 355 km northwest of Windhoek.

The Portuguese explorer Diego Cao reached this part of the world in the year 1486. He is probably one of the people whose experiences discouraged Europeans from venturing ashore until the arrival of the Germans 400 years later. Further south is the Namib-Naukluft National Park, a vast wilderness covering 50,000 sq km. The landscape is very diverse and covers mountain outcrops, majestic sand dunes, and deep cut gorges. For really spectacular dunes, the Sossusvlei area is unsurpassed. Here you have dunes rising to 300 m! The orange tint giants extend as far as the horizon and the area has an unreal, unforgettable atmosphere.

To the northeast of the country, the well-watered Kavango and Caprivi Strip region offers an unspoilt wilderness suitable for rugged game viewing and camping. The area also promises a feast for bird lovers. Game reserves in the area include: Kaudom, Caprivi, Mahango, Mudumu and Mamili. Poachers did great damage to wildlife during the years of the civil war in neighbouring Angola. Animal numbers are however building up rapidly. Some of the wildlife in the region includes leopard, elephant, buffalo, cheetah, lion and various antelope species. The Caprivi Reserve falls in an area of swamps and flood plains. Here you have an opportunity to partake fishing, hiking, game viewing safaris and river trips in traditional mokoro boats.

In Namibia you can enjoy up to 300 days of sunshine. The coast is temperate and thermometers run between 5C-25C. Inland, daytime temperatures range from 20C-34C, but can rise to 40C in the north and south of the country. Winter nights can be quite cold and frost occurs over large parts of the country. The rains inland fall in summer (November-April) and are heaviest in the Caprivi region. Rains do not much affect travel, but beware of flash floods in the vicinity of riverbeds. The best time to travel is over the dry months of March to October, when it is easier to see animals at waterholes. It is best to avoid the Namib Desert and Etosha between December and March when it can get unbearably hot. Before you travel to this country, make sure you review our [Namibia safari and tour offers](#).

You can get by wearing light cottons and linens in summer. Over winter nights and mornings, you need heavier cottons, warmer wraps and sweaters. Comfortable walking shoes are essential, as the ground gets very hot. Some useful stuff to pack includes: camera, binoculars, sunglasses, sun hats, sunscreen and mosquito repellent. Be ready for dusty conditions and carry your clothing, equipment and supplies in dust proof bags. Do not be tempted to buy items made of ivory. You may not be allowed to carry them through customs at home. And it is also good that you do not encourage the trade in ivory products that keeps poachers busy.

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## **2. Destination Facts: Namibia**

**Full Country Name:** Republic of Namibia

**Area:** 824,268 sq km

**Population:** 1.8 million (2001)

**Capital City:** Windhoek

**Other Major Towns:** Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Grootfontein, Okahandja, Otjiwarongo, Oshakati, Rehoboth, Rundu

**Peoples:** 50% Owambo, 9% Kavango, 7% Herero, 7% Damara, 5% Nama, 4% Caprivi, 3% San, 2% Baster, 0.5% Tswana, 7.4% Mixed Race, 6.6% White

**Language:** English (official), Owambo, Afrikaans, German, Kavango, Nama, Religion: Christian (majority -mostly Lutheran), native religions

**Government:** Republic

**Time:** GMT +2

**Currency:** Namibia Dollar (N\$)

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50hz

**Weights and Measures:** Metric

**Economy:** Mining (diamonds, silver, lead, zinc, tin), meatpacking, fish processing, dairy products, crop farming (millet, sorghum, wheat), livestock.

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### **3. Travel Basics: Namibia**

#### **Health**

Several private hospitals and clinics in Windhoek and other large towns provide reasonably quality services. However, visitors should take simple precautions to avoid the need to visit these facilities. A day spent in hospital doesn't do much for your holiday! A yellow fever vaccine certificate is required from travelers coming from yellow fever endemic zones, which are mostly in Africa and South America.

Malaria is prevalent in the northern regions and especially along Kavango and Kunene rivers, provinces of Kunene, Caprivi, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa. The recommended prophylaxis is chloroquine plus proguanil to be taken two weeks prior to your visit. Other preventive measures include; sleeping under a mosquito net, wearing long sleeved tops and trousers, applying mosquito repellants on exposed skin and using insecticide sprays.

Typhoid fever is common throughout the country and especially outside the cities. Vaccination before travel is advisable and care should be exercised in handling food and drink. Tap water in the capital city and other major towns is treated and safe to drink. However one cannot be too careful; bottled water, which is widely available, is safer. Sterilization of water is necessary outside the major towns. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are also safe for consumption.

Other vaccinations are recommended to counter; Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B for travelers who may have intimate contact with local residents, especially if visiting for more than six months and rabies, for travelers who may have direct contact with animals. Generally, visitors should also be up to date on tetanus, diphtheria, measles and varicella immunizations. Travelers' diarrhea can occur, thus visitors are advised to carry anti-diarrheal drugs and take proper precautions with food and drink.

Bilharzia is endemic especially in the east of the country. Visitors should avoid swimming or paddling in fresh water; well-chlorinated swimming pools are safer. Appropriate measures should be taken against contracting HIV/AIDS and other STD's. Those going for safaris are advised to carry anti-bite serums for snakes and scorpions. If you have a significant allergy or chronic medical problem, you should wear a medical alert bracelet. A first aid kit is considered a good investment as an emergency may occur when you are far from any town.

## Visas

A passport valid for a minimum of 6 months is required. All, except nationals of Angola, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mozambique, the Netherlands, the Nordic Countries, Russia, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Portugal, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Zambia and Zimbabwe require a visa. The visas are valid for stays of up to 3 months. An extension can be obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs in Windhoek. Visa requirements however, vary from time to time and you are advised to check on the prevailing status well ahead of travel.

## Peoples and Culture

There are 11 major ethnic groups in Namibia, the largest being the Ovambo who mainly inhabit the north. Other groups include, the Kavango, Herero, Himba, Damara, Nama, Basters, Caprivians among others. The oldest inhabitants of Namibia are the San. Otherwise known as Bushmen, the San people are known for their great story telling, love for music, mimicry and dance.

Each ethnic group has its way of life. The Herero women wear Victorian-style dresses adapted from the wives of Rhenish missionaries. Himba women rub their bodies with a mixture of red ochre and fat. They also wear traditional body ornaments and garments and have hairstyles reflecting their age, sex and social status. The Nama are known for their natural talent in music, poetry and writing style. Their women are highly skilled in sewing. Traditional arts and crafts such as woodcarving, basketry, beadwork, leatherwork and pottery are common practices of the peoples of Namibia. The country also boasts some of the world's oldest rock paintings and engravings, courtesy of the ancestors of Bushmen.

Restaurants and cafes offer a reasonable choice of local and continental cuisine. Each ethnic group has its own staple food. The Ovambo people enjoy mielie pap, a cornmeal porridge and mahango (millet), which they eat with fish, goat, lamb or beef stew. The Nama prefer the spiky inara melon and Herero mainly eat milk products like curds and butters. Pumpkins, peppers and onions are also widely consumed. Game such as biltong (air-dried meat) and rauchfleisch (smoked meat) are also a specialty.

The official language is English but knowledge of Afrikaans and any other local language will prove useful.

## Communication

Telephone, mobile, fax, Internet and postal facilities are widely available in the country. The country code is 264. Mobile phones are based on GSM 900 network and the main network is MTC. There are two main ISP's- IML and NCS and several Internet cafes are spread out in Walvis Bay and Windhoek. Postal

services are quite good with airmail to European countries taking approximately four days to two weeks. The country has five regular major newspapers, four of which are in English; The Namibian and The Windhoek Advertiser which are the daily newspapers, Windhoek Observer which is weekly, The Era printed twice weekly and a daily German newspaper. Radio stations broadcast on AM 2 and FM 39. The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) has nine radio stations and one television station. There are also six privately owned radio stations and one privately owned television station operating from Windhoek. BBC and VOA can be received and their frequencies are available online.

### **Accommodation**

There are several hotels, lodges and camps in Namibia. There are good quality hotels in Windhoek and Swakopmund. Lodges and camps are mainly found in Etosha National Park and other reserves. Advanced booking is advised due to limited availability.

### **Money**

The Namibian Dollar (N\$) is the unit of currency. The South African Rand is also acceptable and exchanges at one for one with the Namibian Dollar. There are five commercial banks and several bureaus that can exchange foreign currencies. Travelers' cheques and major credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Diners Club are widely accepted in hotels and lodges. Visitors are advised to carry travelers' cheques in US dollars or SA Rand rather than foreign currencies, as the conversion rates for travelers' cheques are better. There is a limit on the import and export of local currency set at fifty thousand Namibian dollars. Foreign currencies are not limited but must be declared on arrival. Tipping is only expected in high-class restaurants and hotels but it is not mandatory. It is discouraged in National Parks and reserves.

### **Climate**

The climate in Namibia varies from arid and semi-arid to subtropical. The central region is the most arid area. Here, temperatures can rise to 40 degrees centigrade during the day and drop to below freezing at night. There are two rainy seasons; the short rains which fall between October and December and the long rains falling between January and April. The long rains occur during summer. Temperatures are high during the day and cool at night. Winter occurs from May to September. During this period, large areas are covered with frost. The nights are then cold and the days warm. The Benguela cold current keeps the coast of the Namib Desert cool and free from rain for most of the year. It also leads to the presence of thick fog.

### **International Travel**

Entry into Namibia can be gained through the main airport, Hosea Kutako International Airport, located 38km east of Windhoek. Eros Airport, a medium

sized airport in Windhoek and Walvis Bay International airport accommodate smaller aircraft and take regional flights. Air Namibia - the national airline - provides domestic, regional and international flights. South Africa Airways, British Airways, LTU International Airways and Lufthansa Airways also provide regional and international flights.

It is often cheaper to fly to South Africa and then go to Namibia overland or by air. South Africa Airways and Air Namibia operate daily flights between Johannesburg, Cape Town and Windhoek. Air Namibia also provides flights between Windhoek and Harare, Victoria Falls, Lusaka, Maun and Gaborone.

There are roads linking Namibia to South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and bus services operate on these routes. Car hire firms are also available in Windhoek and other major towns. Un-tarred roads such the one linking Botswana to Namibia are being upgraded.

The railway network links most towns in Namibia to Windhoek, which then connects to Cape Town and Johannesburg in South Africa.

### **Local Travel**

The national airline and charter flight operators provide domestic flights. This is a quick way of getting between major towns. But it is also an expensive way to travel. Thrifty travelers use road or rail. Bus services between Windhoek and other major towns are available. The Trans-Namib railway operates a good service that connects most major towns. Luxury trains are available for tourists and offer first and second-class options.

Car hire companies are available in major towns for those who wish to drive themselves. Traffic drives on the left and a majority of roads are tarred and thus self-drive is a comfortable experience. An international driving permit is required of foreigners. Make sure to observe speed limits, wear seat belts and worn and adhere to road signs, which are internationally recognized. Taxi and public bus services are available in Windhoek.

### **Travel Insurance**

Health insurance is essential. Ensure your cover extends to medical expenses abroad including possible evacuation to your country. Carry all your relevant insurance documents and keep them safe. Before travel, clarify whether your insurance plan will pay directly for your health expenses or will reimburse you later.

### **What to Wear**

Light summer clothes are adequate during the day as temperatures can soar especially during summer. Warm clothes should also be carried - the nights get

quite chilly even during summer and also for the cold winter mornings. Sunglasses, sunscreen and sun hats will prevent you getting sunburned. If you forget them, don't panic, they can be bought in all the major towns.

A good pair of light but closed shoes is necessary, as the ground gets quite hot during the day. A lightweight raincoat is useful especially if you travel during the rainy season, that is, January to April. Namibia has been described as a photographers' paradise, thus a camera and lots of film is necessary packing. Also, a good pair of binoculars is a good investment.

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## **4. About Africa Point**

**Africapoint.com** is an Africa specialist travel agent, offering travel services through the company website -Africapoint.com and also offline. This pioneering Africa travel website has been assisting travelers make bookings online since early 1999.

The company was started in 1997 has its central reservations office strategically located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The company is supported by a network of partner offices in the leading destinations in Africa. This includes Cape Town (South Africa), Arusha, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Cairo (Egypt), Kampala (Uganda), Victoria (Seychelles), Harare (Zimbabwe) and Botswana. We are members of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA).

### **What services do we offer?**

We provide reservation services for hotels, airline tickets, rental cars, tours and safaris to the top destinations in Africa. Among the countries we are currently covering are Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Mauritius.

We have special discounts for most of the services we offer and some of our prices are upto 50% off standard rates. Please visit our website to view the links of all the services we offer.

### **How do we make your Africa travel planning easier?**

Ours is one of very few websites offering one-stop travel booking and information service to a number of different African countries. In addition:

- We know our destinations and our products **very well**. We are in a position to give you good advice on the best hotel, rental car, tour or safari to suit your particular requirements.
- We are committed to working to the highest industry standards. We have many our past clients who are happy to share their experiences with you. Please visit the [Client Profile & Testimonials](#) page and see what some of our clients have to say.
- Our patience is the stuff of legend! We will patiently seek to answer all your queries until you are ready to pick what is most suitable for your

needs. For high value items such as safaris we have communicated with our clients for 6 months and even longer before they are ready to buy.

Others have come back to and said: "Do you remember that tour we discussed 2 years ago? I am now ready to travel." And of course we remember. We always remember!

- Together with our partners, we are based in the African destination whose travel services we are selling. For this reason we are usually able to get you very good prices. For some products our prices are **40-50%** below standard rates.
- As members of **ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents)** we are committed to upholding **ASTA's** motto of " Integrity in Travel" and operate to those same standards you would expect from an ASTA member anywhere in the world.

One of our North American clients for whose 36 person missionary group we provided an air charter, hotel booking, safari and road transport to 2 African countries had this to say.

*"My experience with Africapoint.com was good as any service that I've received any where in the USA. Not only were they helpful before and during, but they went out of their way to also be helpful afterwards.*

*I'm using them again for an upcoming trip in November and will look forward to using them for years to come."*

In addition our membership of ASTA assures you of a **neutral and trusted** arbitrator in the event that a disagreement occurs between us.

### **What is the experience of other travelers with us?**

We continue to serve the many needs of travelers who seek our services. From straight forward single night hotel bookings to short and long term **car rental, tours and safaris** for individuals and groups, international conferences.

## **5. Forward This Report**

If you've found this report to be informative and useful please forward it to your family and friends. We're sure they will like it as much as you did!