TOUR CODE

SA3

ADVENTURESABROAD

SOUTHERN AFRICA & NAMIBIA

with Victoria Falls, Botswana, Zambia, & Swaziland

29 days

Updated 14/03/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Johannesburg*

Arrive in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Johannesburg is South Africa's financial centre and largest city. This "Place of Gold", as the Sotho word for Gauteng Province suggests, harbours the gold fields of South Africa. No one could have imagined the repercussions when an unemployed miner found a stone bearing traces of gold in 1886. This seemingly insignificant event led to the discovery of the world's richest natural treasure trove. People flocked to the area from all ends of the earth and the open pastoral landscape changed almost overnight. Today in the "New South Africa," Johannesburg continues as the country's -- indeed the entire region's -- economic powerhouse and is evolving into a very vibrant cultural melting pot.

Overnight in Johannesburg (Sandton). Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Johannesburg, South Africa - Livingstone, Zambia - Victoria Falls*

Today we fly from South Africa to Zambia where we will spend three nights next to one of the world's most spectacular natural sights, Victoria Falls. Our arrival point is the town of Livingstone, once an important town in southern Africa during the first days of European settlement and the beginnings of colonial rule.

This area has actually been inhabited for hundreds of thousands of years. The first known name of the falls was "Shongwe"; the current name did not come into being until the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone was brought to the falls in 1855 and named them after Queen Victoria. The falls and the nearby town of Livingstone are on the mighty Zambezi River, the fourth longest in Africa, forming the border with neighbouring Zimbabwe.

We will pass through the sleepy colonial town of Livingstone, the main street of which is lined with classic colonial buildings. These Victorian tin roofed houses with wooden verandas, many of which are decaying, are a typical example of English settler architecture. In 1905 settlers moved in to the higher ground at Livingstone to escape malaria. Livingstone became the capital of Northern Rhodesia in 1911, but the capital was moved to Lusaka in 1935.

After settling in to our hotel, we will have a leisurely walking tour of the Zambian side of the falls. One special vantage point is the Knife Edge Bridge which affords views of the Eastern Cataract; the Main Falls, the Boiling Pot, where the river turns into the Batoka Gorge; and the famous Zambezi River Bridge, commissioned by Cecil John Rhodes. The bridge was completed in 1905 but Rhodes never lived to see it completed.

NOTE: Due to variable flight schedules and weather considerations, the order of Victoria Falls area sightseeing activities may vary at the discretion of your Tour Leader.

Overnight at Victoria Falls, Zambia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Victoria Falls, Zambia: Day Trip to Chobe Park, Botswana*

Today we make an early morning excursion into Botswana to visit Chobe National Park, located only 1.75 hours away from Livingstone. Our journey includes a private 5-minute boat crossing at the point where four counties (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Namibia) meet on the Zambezi River. We complete Customs and Immigration formalities and continue with a fifteen-minute drive to the lodge that we will be using as a base for today's activities.

Our safari starts with a cruise on the Chobe River (shade and refreshments available) that takes us close to the waterfowl and wildlife on the river. Large flocks of birds, big pods of hippos and very large crocodiles can be viewed from the safety of your boat.

Our lunch (included today) is served back at the lodge overlooking the river.

After lunch we board open (covered) safari vehicles and head off into the park to view some of the 70,000 local elephants, buffalo herds, sable, wildebeest, giraffe, and with luck, some resident lion and hyena. The game drive meanders its way back to the park gates for Customs and Immigration formalities and the crossing of the Zambezi River into back into Zambia and the road transfer back to our hotel, arriving at about 18:00.

Overnight at Victoria Falls (dinner on your own this evening). Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 4 *Victoria Falls, Zambia: Local Village & Leisure Time*

This morning we visit an authentic Zambian village. The chief has invited visitors into his village to get a glimpse of how his people have lived for generations and to learn a little about their traditional customs and beliefs. The Chief's guides and the people of the village are more than happy to show visitors their huts and take you inside, explain how they are built and decorated, introduce you to various craftsmen and women at work. This is a working village, not a purpose- built tourist attraction, and it is a privilege to be welcomed in.

This afternoon is free for optional activities: Scenic flights, river boat trips, an excursion to the Zimbabwe side, or trips into Livingstone to visit the David Livingstone and / or Railway museums, can be arranged with the assistance of your Tour Leader. Costs and bookings for these optionals are available upon arrival in Zambia.

Overnight at Victoria Falls, Zambia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Victoria Falls, Zambia - Johannesburg, South Africa*

Today we fly from Livingstone / Victoria Falls to Johannesburg (flight times are variable).

Overnight in Johannesburg (Sandton). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Johannesburg - Soweto - Tshwane (Pretoria) - Johannesburg*

This morning we have a tour of the city of Soweto.

Soweto unto itself is actually one of the largest cities in Africa with an estimated population of 2 million. It also has one of the most dubious histories of any city in Africa, as it was the site of some of the more infamous events during the struggle against apartheid. The name "Soweto" simply stands for South Western Township, due to its location outside Johannesburg. It was here that thousands of black workers were forced to live in order to provide labour for the gold mines.

We will see the good, the bad, and the ugly of Soweto -- from affluent neighbourhoods to shanty towns; the world's largest hospital, Baragwanath; and the former homes of Soweto's Nobel Laureates, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. We also visit the excellent new museum dedicated to the victims of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

En route to Pretoria we will visit the extraordinarily powerful Apartheid Museum, an obligatory stop for visitors and residents alike. The large blown-up photographs, metal cages and numerous monitors with continuous replays of apartheid scenes will make you feel that you were in the townships in the 70s and 80s, dodging police bullets or teargas canisters, or marching with thousands of school children. One can easily spend the better part of a day in this museum; however, for the sake of timing on a busy day, we will be taking in the highlights only.

We continue to Pretoria (recently renamed Tshwane*), the administrative capital of the Republic of South Africa. Surrounded by hilly countryside, this relaxed capital is known for its colourful gardens and lush green parks. We will see Church Square, dominated by its statue of the Boer Republic's first President, Paul Kruger, and lined with buildings of architectural and historical interest. From here we will proceed to a panoramic view of the city at the Union Buildings, the administrative headquarters of the Government of South Africa and scene of Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the New South Africa's first democratically elected State President in 1994.

* Tshwane is the name of a pre-colonial local chief and means "We Are the Same". In 2005 the city council approved the switch from Pretoria to Tshwane as part of an effort to make place names more African.

Overnight in Johannesburg (Sandton). Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Johannesburg - the 'Panoramic Route' - Hazyview*

From Jo'burg we head off through the vast wilderness of Mpumalanga (formerly the Eastern Transvaal), the "Land of the Rising Mist". Along the way we travel from the vast grasslands of the High Veld, with its huge farms and ranches, down to the drier Low Veld region characterized by rocky hills and acacia scrub forest. This is an expansive landscape of mountains, valleys, rivers, waterfalls, primal forests, and colourful flora. Steeped in a history of pioneers and fortune-seekers, we will pass many Gold Rush towns and farming communities en route. Lydenburg ("town of suffering") established by Voortrekkers in 1849 lies at the bottom of Long Tom pass. This pass, named after the big gun used by the Afrikaners during the Anglo Boer War, is one of the most scenically dramatic in the country. It links Sabie on the escarpment with Lydenburg on the Drakensberg plateau.

A highlight of our sightseeing today is the spectacular Blyde River Canyon. This great escarpment is the kind of place where brochures and guide books run out of original adjectives to describe the fresh mountain scenery and magnificent panoramic views. The Blyde River Canyon is one of the most spectacular in Africa and its cliffs rise between 600-800 m (2,000-2,640 feet) from the river bed. At the "Three Rondavels viewpoint" is an unforgettable view of three huge rock spirals rising out of the far wall of the canyon. Their tops appear to have a hut-like rounded roof.

Following the road and the Treur River south, there are further viewpoints; Wonder View, God's Window and the Pinnacle. Their names help to conjure up the indescribable vastness of the scenery. From here we continue to Hazyview near Kruger National Park.

Overnight in Hazyview. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Kruger National Park*

Early this morning we enter South Africa's largest game reserve, Kruger National Park, named after Paul Kruger, the

first to initiate the setting aside of this area as a reserve in the 1890s. Here we transfer to open safari vehicles and make a full-day excursion through the southern sector of this fascinating and beautiful park.

The Kruger Park is an enormous area of flat veld, broken by rivers and comprised of mixed vegetation and terrain. The park, officially founded in 1926, supports more species of wildlife than any other African reserve -- over 137 mammal species, 49 fish species, 112 reptile species, and nearly 500 bird species! With some luck we may see and photograph lion, leopard, cheetah, elephant, zebra and many other wonderful African animals.

We return to Hazyview in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Hazyview. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Hazyview, South Africa - Mbabane, Swaziland*

We travel south today and enter the Kingdom of Swaziland, an independent country completely landlocked by South Africa and Mozambique, and smaller than Kruger Park! Naturally fortified by beautiful mountains, Swaziland remains one of the last kingdoms in Africa, a continent once dominated by colonialism. The pace of life here is relaxed and the lifestyle traditional; we will see rural people working their farms and tending their herds as we make our way to the vicinity of Mbabane, the capital city.

Overnight in / near Mbabane. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Mbabane, Swaziland - St Lucia Wetlands, South Africa*

This morning we depart our hotel and travel south, descending onto the Swazi Lowveld (lowlands), similar in climate and vegetation of the lowveld region we experienced in South Africa and Kruger Park in previous days. We'll travel through sugar cane plantations and the bustling commercial centre of Manzini, before crossing the border back into South Africa and the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Our destination today is the St Lucia Wetlands. Lake St Lucia and the Eastern Shores together comprise the largest estuarine system on the African continent. Lake St Lucia was declared a Natural World Heritage Site by UNESCO -- South Africa's first -- on December 1, 1999. The park features a variety of landforms including coral reefs, long sandy beaches, coastal dunes, lake systems, swamps, and extensive reed and papyrus wetlands.

This afternoon we enjoy a boat safari on Lake St Lucia, with excellent opportunities to view hippo, crocodile, and myriad bird species for which the park is famous.

Overnight at St Lucia. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *St Lucia - Durban - Port Elizabeth*

This morning we participate in another nature / game viewing activity at St Lucia before travelling by road to Durban, the 'Garden City' of South Africa. This area was opened up to white settlement by the Voortrekkers in the early 19th century, though the Portuguese were navigating the coast here as early as the late 15th century. Vasco da Gama was the first European to sail along this coast, giving it the name Natal to commemorate his Christmas Day arrival. In 1899 the British and the Boers went to war, but under reconciliation in 1910 formed the Union of South Africa with an agreement signed in what is now Durban's modern-day Main Post Office.

This evening we fly from Durban to Port Elizabeth, the start of the famous "Garden Route." (As this will likely be an evening flight, we will not be including dinner this evening).

Overnight in Port Elizabeth. Meal plan: Breakfast.

Day 12 *Port Elizabeth - 'The Garden Route' - Knysna OR George*

Port Elizabeth is South Africa's fifth largest city and the third largest port. This morning we will have a brief panoramic tour of this city seeing the Market Square and the beaches of Algoa Bay.

From Port Elizabeth we travel along the world-famous 'Garden Route' toward Knysna. This route is parallel to the ocean and features lakes, mountains, beaches, and steep cliffs. This part of the garden route reminds one of the Oregon Coast (USA) with its sand dunes and great surf beaches. We'll make a lunch stop at Storm's River Mouth in the Tsitsikamma National Park, located on the shores of the Indian Ocean. You will have time to walk a short section of the famed Otter Trail, widely regarded as one of the finest in the world, stretching 41 km (25 mi - 5 days) from Storms River Mouth to Nature's Valley.

We continue to Knysna, a charming coastal town with tremendous water and mountain view and a laid-back lifestyle. The town was founded in 1817 by George Rex, reputed to be an illegitimate son of King George III. Known for its picturesque lagoon, the town was first established as a timber port. Today, Knysna is proud of its riviera atmosphere with many sidewalk cafes and shops.

Depending on limited accommodation availability in Knysna, we may overnight here in Knysna or continue a little further down the road to the town of George.

Overnight in Knysna or George. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Knysna OR George - Mossel Bay - Outdshoorn*

This morning we travel down the coast to Mossel Bay. Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias arrived here on February 3, 1488, thus proving to his sponsors that Africa had a southern tip; making it theoretically possible to sail from Europe to India. Our destionation is the Dias Museum Complex, which marks the spot of the historical landing of Bartolomeu Dias. The 500 year old Post Office Tree, a national monument, can still be seen at the site, now harbouring a post box shaped as a shoe.

We then head inland and over the Outeniqua Mountains to the Little Karoo (Klein Karoo), a semi-arid yet fertile valley or depression surrounded by formidable mountian ranges. This is the ostrich capital of South Africa with thousands of these unusual birds dotting fields throughout the area. At the turn of the century ostrich feathers were in such demand that the fashion conscious paid a premium and feathered the nests of the barons who built magnificent mansions known as "Feather Palaces." This fine architecture can still be seen around the sedate and pleasant town of Outdshoorn (pronounced 'Oats-horn'), our final destination.

We will have lunch at one of the region's main ostrich show farms, followed by a tour thereof before continuing to Outdshoorn where we finish our day.

Overnight in Outdshoorn. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Outdshoorn - Swellendam - Cape Town*

From Oudtshoorn we travel through the Huis River Pass with its spectacular rock formations, and the little farming town of Ladysmith, named after the Spanish wife of British Cape Governor Sir Harry Smith. We cross our second mountain range of the day to arrive in the town of Swellendam, the third oldest colonial town in South Africa, established in 1745. Here you will have time to have lunch and visit several historic buildings built in the charming Cape Dutch style with characteristic whitewashed walls and black, thatched roofs.

We then pass through a vast wheat growing and sheep farming area on our way to Cape Town. In the late afternoon we cross the Hottentot's Holland Mountains (our third range for the day), the centre of South Africa's apple growing region, to arrive in Cape Town, one of the world's most isolated and beautiful cities.

Overnight in Cape Town. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Cape Town: the Cape Peninsula*

Today we have the quintessential full-day tour of the Cape Town area: The Cape Peninsula.

Our tour takes us south along the Atlantic Seaboard where we have spectacular views of some of Cape Town's most affluent neighbourhoods and spectacular mountain and coastal scenery. We have a brief photo stop just before Camp's Bay, a pretty surfside suburban community featuring the classic view of the town with the 'Twelve Apostles' peaks as a backdrop.

We continue south along a seaside-hugging route, through the town of Hout Bay and the famous Chapman's Peak Drive, one of the most spectacular marine drives anywhere in the world. The 9km route, with its 114 curves, skirts the rocky coastline of Chapman's Peak, the 593m high southerly extension of Constantia Berg.

Our next stop is the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve and Cape Point. The reserve is a wildflower, bird, and animal paradise on 77 sq km (30 sq miles) of the Cape Peninsula. The reserve is also home to eland, springbok, bontebok, baboon, and zebra. Within the reserve are Cape Point and the Cape of Good Hope, the most southwesterly point on the African continent.

After a break for lunch and free time at Cape Point, we head north again, stopping briefly at the Cape of Good Hope, before continuing back up the Indian Ocean side of the peninsula, passing through Simonstown, founded by the Dutch in 1741 as a naval depot and named for Simon van der Stel, governor of Cape Colony from 1679 to 1697. Today Simonstown is famous for its distinctly English architecture and atmosphere, and the southernmost train station on the continent.

We complete our loop around the peninsula, past the well-watered eastern slopes of Table Mountain, Constantia, Bishops Court and the campuses of the University of Cape Town.

Overnight in Cape Town. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 16 *The Cape Winelands*

This morning we travel the short distance to Stellenbosch, South Africa's second oldest colonial settlement. After a little spin around the town, we'll park in the centre of town and allow some time for some independent, on-foot exploration. You will notice some of the finest examples of traditional Cape Dutch architecture along the town's famous oak-lined streets.

We continue to one of the area's many wineries for a cellar tour and tasting. The Cape vineyards were originated at

Constantia by Jan van Riebeeck in 1685 and were advanced in 1688 by Hugenot refugees who brought their vine seedlings and skills with them from France. The Cape's different soils and climatic variations allow a wide variety of wines to be pressed. Along our route today we will see several wine estates with their delightful Cape Dutch houses, thatched roofs and decorative gables.

Today we include lunch at one of the area's wine estates. After lunch we'll continue our scenic drive through the area before heading back to Cape Town for dinner on your own.

Overnight in Cape Town. Meal plan: Breakfast and lunch.

Day 17 *Cape Town: Table Mountain & City Tour*

We will start our day with a gondola trip to the top of Table Mountain,* a sandstone plateau rising up above the city. The top is approximately 3km wide and at its highest point, Maclear's Beacon, rises to 1085m / 3,580 ft. Over the centuries it has become one of South Africa's most famous landmarks. The steep cliffs and rocky outcrops of the mountain play home to a number of animals and approximately 1,470 species of plants -- more than the entire British Isles!

After descending the mountain we tour Cape Town, the seat of the Parliament, which holds a six-month session here each year. We will see the Houses of Parliament, the Malay Quarter with its narrow streets and minarets; the Castle of Good Hope, South Africa's oldest building; and visit the South African Museum.

We also visit the National Botanical Gardens of Kirstenbosch, with over 4,000 species of indigenous plants (2,600 are endemic to the Cape Peninsula). The garden's history dates back to the 1660s, when the first Dutch settlers arrived in the Cape. Governor Jan van Riebeeck planted a barrier of Wild Almonds to protect settlers' cattle from the original inhabitants of the area -- and part of this hedge is still in the garden!

* NOTE: The order of our Cape Town sightseeing may vary depending on weather. Table Mountain is particularly susceptible to cloud and mist and may be accomplished elsewhere in our program at the discretion of your Tour Leader.

Overnight in Cape Town. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 18 *Cape Town, South Africa - Windhoek, Namibia*

Today we fly from Cape Town to Windhoek.*

Flight schedules permitting, we will have a brief tour of Windhoek, a small, rather elegant city with a distinctly German feel about it, located in the country's central highlands. The city is full of trees and gardens, plus some splendid buildings dating from the turn of the century, all jumbled up with post-modernist office blocks in a swirl of ethnic mix. The multicultural nature of Namibia is most evident on the streets, where you can see influences of the Wambo, Herero and Damara people, among many others. Remainder of the day for relaxation in some of the city's fine German konditerais (German-style pastry and bake shops) and/or shopping for souvenirs such as gemstones and tribal crafts.

* NOTE: The cost of this flight is NOT included in the land only tour price. We can quote / book this fare for LAND ONLY passengers at the current rate.

Overnight in Windhoek. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 19 *Windhoek - Namib-Naukluft National Park*

Today we leave the interior plateau region and head southwest through the Gamsberg Pass to the Namib Desert, through magnificent colours, pastel-basted rock formations, and waves of taupe-coloured grasses. Even the clouds are tinged orange-pink as distant dunes reflect their colour skywards. In the Nama language, Namib means vast, and this is an understatement. At the opposite end of the moisture scale is the parched Namib Desert with endless orange dunes blown into razor sharp ridges by the sand-shifting wind. The famous Sossusvlei sand dunes at 300m (1,000 ft), are the highest in the world, towering over their nearest rivals in Arabia, and just begging to be climbed barefoot.

Animals, insects, and plants have adapted to live in this generally inhospitable region and apart from infrequent rains, rely on the sea mist that rolls far inland. En route we have the chance to see kudu, springbok, gemsbok and black eagles set against some of the most expansive and dramatically rugged scenery in the world.

En route we have several stops for scenery viewing and photos. Upon arrival this afternoon you will have time to wander the land around our lodge and enjoy the multi-hued sands, strange twisted acacia trees, and almost guaranteed perfect sunset.

Overnight in the vicinity of the Namib-Naklauft National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 20 *Namib-Naukluft National Park*

Very early this morning we drive into the park to a special place called Sossusvlei, a huge dried up pan (vlei) which sporadically holds water, at the base of some of the most spectacular dunes in the Namib. We watch the morning sun light up the apricot coloured sands, the long shadows accentuating the graceful, almost feminine curves of the dune crests. These immense rich ochre sand dunes are one of the most wondrous sights in the world.

Geologists say that this desert, covering most of the Namib-Naklauft Park, could be the oldest in the world. The older the dune, the brighter the colour from slow iron oxidisation and minute fragments of garnets. Dwarfed by the sheer size of the dunes, your footprints look like insect trails and each step forward forms a mini sand-slide. The solitude is immeasurable and your place in the great scheme of life takes on a curious insignificance. Visually powerful and deafeningly silent, this unforgettable experience is a high point of our visit to the Namib. Possible game sightings include oryx antelope, springbok, or ostrich.

At Sossusvlei we have plenty of time to walk into the heart of the dunes, scale a dune or two for panoramic views, and walk across the sand to a pan called Dead Vlei. This spooky place is named as such because of the blackened dead acacia trees that "sprout" from a blinding white pan against an orange dune backdrop. Stupendous.

On our way back to our accommodation we will make a stop at Sesriem Canyon, located near the entry gate to Sossussvlei. It was an important source of water for early inhabitants and even during dry times there is water in the upper reaches, where deep clefts in the rock reduce evaporation. Explorers, transport riders and early travellers used to lower a bucket down to collect the water and it normally took 6 lengths of thong tied together, hence the Afrikaans name 'Ses' meaning six, and 'Riem' meaning thong. The canyon was formed by the Tsauchab River rising in the Naukluft and Zaris Mountains to the east, and flowing through to Sossusvlei. Walking through the canyon takes you on a journey back 10-20 million years ago when sedimentary layers of gravel and sand were deposited and cemented together by lime. The ledges are now inhabited by pigeons, raucous pied crows and chattering starlings.

Overnight in the vicinity of Namib-Naklauft National Park. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 21 *Namib-Naukluft Park - Swakopmund*

We continue our journey north through Namib-Naukluft Park via Solitaire. As the name suggests, this is a lonely place in the middle of absolutely nowhere. The only reason it exists at all is to service visitors to the park. It used to have one solitary tree, one petrol pump, a take away kiosk and a captive puff adder. But big things have been happening here and there are now two or three petrol pumps, a fully blown cafeteria and small shop. The dead tree is still standing stark against the flat dry landscape, but the puff adder has gone.

We continue our journey through the spectacular rocky Kuiseb Canyon (photo stops en route) -- with possible sightings of baboon, rock hyrax, or, if lucky, leopard -- to the German colonial resort town of Swakopmund. This is Namibia's second biggest town and traditional "summer capital", and one of the most surreal places in this surreal country. You approach the town through the endless expanses of the Namib Desert, one of the world's largest wilderness areas. Then, through the mists (it is almost always misty in the morning and late afternoon) Bavarian spires and elaborate Germanic architecture rise through the fog banks. The boom of the surf on the notorious Skeleton Coast is an ever-present reminder of the icy Atlantic Ocean beyond.

Overnight in Swakopmund. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 22 *Swakopmund*

Today is free to wander the streets of charming Swakopmund. The town is an eclectic mixture of Bohemian and Bavarian, home to an intriguing mix of artists, hippies, strait-laced descendants of German settlers, stately Herero women in Victorian dress, and hardened miners, game rangers, safari operators and fishermen. Swakopmund exudes romance and history, a rich cultural melting pot of old and new. Nighttime entertainment ranges from sophisticated spins on the casino's roulette wheels, through raucous parties at the many pubs and restaurants, to an assortment of drama, music and cultural events. It is indeed odd to be in a little corner of old Bavaria wedged between one of the world's harshest deserts and even harsher coastlines.

You might wish to take an optional scenic flight along the famed Skeleton Coast where you may get a glimpse of the Damara desert-dwelling elephants, the many shipwrecks that litter the coast, or perhaps the sea of dunes to the south. Your Tour Leader can help you with these and other options.

Overnight in Swakopmund. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 23 *Swakopmund - Skeleton Coast - Twyfelfontein*

From Swakopmund we travel briefly up the desolate but beautiful Skeleton Coast, the name referring to the treacherous nature of the coast and the fact that it is a graveyard for many ships. The attraction for visitors to this region is its untouched and mysterious barren beauty, swept by cold sea breezes and often enveloped in a dense fog. This fog accounts for the many shipwrecks and the unique ecosystem which gives life to most unusual plants. The strange ‘Elephant's Foot' plant anchors itself in rock crevices, while desert succulents like Lithops look exactly like pebbles until a tiny yellow flower emerges.

We then head into the semi-arid environs of Damaraland, past Spitzkoppe Mountain in the distance and the soaring Brandberg Range to Twyfelfontein. This is stunning country and our journey is broken up by opportunities to stretch our legs, examine interesting stones, plants, bugs etc, and to photograph the amazing landscape.

Overnight at Twyfelfontein. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 24 *Twyfelfontein Area*

This morning we will examine some of Africa's finest prehistoric rock art -- paintings and engraving dating back some 5,000 years. We also visit a geological oddity known as the Valley of the Organ Pipes, the Burnt Mountain, and the Petrified Forest, where we can also view some welwitchias, a strange looking plant reputed to live for over 1,000 years.

Everywhere you turn are strange rock formations, unbelievable colours, and interesting and unique plants, birds, and other fauna. Our guide will bring to life the natural and human history of this otherworldly and remote corner of the planet.

Overnight in Twyfelfontein. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 25 *Twyfelfontein - Etosha National Park*

Today we travel toward Etosha National Park.

Etosha has been referred to as the best kept secret in Africa's safari world, and is one of the world's largest national parks. Its concentration of wildlife is extraordinary, and the dependence on water holes throughout so much of the year makes the wildlife readily visible. In fact, it may just be possible to enter the lives of a more spectacular array of creatures with greater ease and intimacy here at Etosha than anywhere else on the globe.

Time permitting, we may be able to have a game drive in the vicinity of our lodge this afternoon.

Overnight in the vicinity of Etosha Park (HOTEL / LODGE). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 26 *Etosha National Park*

We have a full day game viewing* in the park, which will take us past the Etosha pan itself, a huge shimmering expanse of usually dry lake bed criss-crossed by myriad animal tracks.

When the original lake at Etosha dried out, it resulted in a hard, dazzling white calcrete wasteland where mirages shimmer above the mineral-rich "salt desert." This salt is important to wildlife. The alkaline clay of the pan cannot sustain life, though the surrounding open savannah cam. In years of exceptional rainfall, the park again resembles a lake, albeit only centimetres deep in parts. It can then briefly sustain a rich profusion of micro-organic life that entices thousands of flamingoes to breed here.

Etosha was once the largest natural park in the world, but it has since been re-shaped several times until being reduced to its present size in 1967. The pan, clearly seen from space, is the park's central feature and takes up one-quarter of its area. There are no roads into the pan, but along the southern fringes is a network of trails linking the three main rest camps and natural waterholes in between.

Our pace is leisurely and set by the animals that we encounter. Possibilities include: elephant, lion, cheetah, giraffe, and many hooved species, including zebra, antelope, and many many birds.

* For our full days of game viewing in Etosha we will be using open safari-style vehicles (ie Land Rover / Land cruiser) with space for 4-6.

Overnight in the vicinity of Etosha (HOTEL / LODGE). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 27 *Etosha National Park*

Today we heading over to the eastern side of Etosha, so after breakfast we pack our bags and head out into the park for more fantastic game viewing. Every part of the park supports different species and it is possible that we will see entirely different things today.

Lunch will be at Halali Rest Camp in the centre of the park; we should reach Namutoni by late afternoon, game-viewing en route. Namutoni centres around a historic German fort dating back to 1903 and declared a national monument in 1950.

We leave the park at Namutoni and travel the short distance to our lodge.

Overnight in the vicinity of Etosha (HOTEL / LODGE). Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 28 *Etosha - Ombili Bushman Project - Windhoek*

We leave Etosha early today and take a short drive to the Ombili Bushman Project where we can spend some time learning about the fascinating lives of today's San people (Bushmen). The village here allows a good insight into how the San of today are coping with the modern world.

We continue to Windhoek on a good, paved road. The Windhoek area is at a refreshing altitude amongst rolling bush-dotted hills and is well watered by rain. It does, however, get so hot that the rain evaporates soon after each dramatic downpour. Winters are bright but very chilly at night and summers wonderfully hot.

Overnight in Windhoek. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 29 *Departure*

Today we depart from Windhoek.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.