

SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIRCUIT

South Africa, Eswatini, Namibia, Botswana & Zimbabwe

33 days

Created on: 6 Dec, 2023

Day 1 Arrive in Johannesburg

Arrival in Johannesburg. We transfer to our hotel in Sandton, a suburb north of Jo'burg.

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).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Johannesburg & Soweto

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 two 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, one of the world's largest hospital, Baragwanath; and the former homes of Soweto's Nobel Laureates, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. We also visit the Hector Pietersen memorial where we will learn of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

A compelling highlight of our day is our visit to 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.

We'll also be able to have a panoramic view of central Johannesburg before circling back around to Sandton and our hotel.

Overnight in Johannesburg (Sandton).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 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

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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.

We also stop at the nearby Bourke's Luck Potholes, the result of decades of swirling eddies of water where the Treur River meets the Blyde River. The tumult has caused extensive water erosion over time; the result is a series of cylindrical rock sculptures that look as though they would be more comfortable on the moon.

From here we continue to Hazyview near Kruger National Park.

Overnight in Hazyview.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 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.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Hazyview, South Africa - Mbabane, Eswatini (Swaziland)

We travel south today and enter the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), an independent country completely landlocked by South Africa and Mozambique, and smaller than Kruger Park! Naturally fortified by beautiful mountains, Eswatini 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.

Before arriving at our hotel, we'll visit Ngwenya Glass, a glassblowing institution that got its start as a Swedish aid initiative in the 1980's. All of the glass art is made from 100% recycled glass and they support a number of conservation programmes locally.

Overnight in/near Mbabane.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Mbabane, Eswatini - Mkuze Game Reserve, 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. Before leaving the kingdom, we'll visit Swazi Candles, a candle making manufacturer both of both traditional parafin wax as well as 100% organic soya candle tea lights. The colourful, handmade product range also features wax encased LED lights, pure vegetable glycerine soaps, and marula oil bodybalm. Guests are invited to interact with the artisans as they work their magic.

We'll then 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.

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Our destination is Mkuze Game Reserve, which boast an exceptional variety of natural habitats: from the Eastern slopes of the Lebombo Mountains along its eastern boundary, to broad stretches of acacia savannah, swamps and a variety of woodlands and riverine forest. A rare type of sand forest also occurs in the reserve. It is renowned among ornithologists, with more than 420 different bird species on record. The Mkuze River curves along the game reserve's northern and eastern borders with a stretch of fig forest along its banks. Fish eagles swoop over the pans, snatching prey spotted from their perches in the fever trees.

Mkuze is overlooked by Ghost Mountain, previously a historic battle field. This mountain is said to be the tombs of the previous chiefs of the mountain and, according to legend, it has been the scene of a number of bloody fights. With its dramatic silhouette, in the shape of an old woman or witch head, it is not difficult to understand why the mountain is said to be haunted and to be the theatre of paranormal activities.

Overnight at Mkuze.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Mkuze - Hluluwe-iMfolozi Game Reserve - Fly to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth)

This morning we leave Mkuze and head to Hluluwe-Imfolozi Park, the oldest proclaimed nature reserve in Africa. The park is known for its rich wildlife and conservation efforts; this is the only state-run park in KwaZulu-Natal where all of the "big five" wild animals can be found (elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo and leopard).

We continue 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.

Flight time permitting, we may be able to drive through Durban for a quick look before heading to the airport for our flight to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth)** South Africa's fifth largest city and the third largest port.

* Occasionally, due to ever-changing flight schedules, we may spend this night in Durban and take the early flight to Gqeberha tomorrow morning.

** In 2019, the Eastern Cape Geographical Names Committee recommended that Port Elizabeth be renamed Gqeberha, after the Xhosa and Southern Khoe name for the Baakens River that flows through the city. The pronunciation can be a bit tricky, as the "Q" represents a "click" sound with the tongue, then 'be' (like bare), and finally 'gha' (similar to the 'G' in Afrikaans + a short 'ah'). If it's easier, the town is also colloquially referred to as "PE."

Overnight in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Gqeberha - 'The Garden Route' - Knysna OR George

This morning 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 views 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.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Knysna OR George - Mossel Bay - Oudtshoorn

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 destination 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 mountain 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 Oudtshoorn (pronounced 'Oats-horn'), our final destination.

Today we'll tour one of the ostrich "show farms" in the area before continuing to Oudtshoorn where we finish our day.

Overnight in Oudtshoorn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Oudtshoorn - Swellendam - Cape Town

From Oudtshoorn we travel through the Huis River Pass with its spectacular rock formations and the little farming town of Ladismith, 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. The town has several 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 Hottentots 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.

At some point during our time in Cape Town (weather dependent and may move elsewhere in our program), we will take 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!

Overnight in Cape Town.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Cape Town: Robben Island & City Tour

This morning we travel by boat to Robben Island for a guided tour of this historic site, formerly an infamous prison and today a museum. Our entire excursion will last about 3.5 hours and include a visit to the maximum security section where Apartheid era freedom fighters, including Nelson Mandela, were incarcerated. Robben Island provides a poignant reminder of how far South Africa has come since the dark days of apartheid and is a must-see for anyone heading to the Cape.

We'll also have a 'panoramic' look at the city centre of Cape Town, where we will see Parliament, City Hall, and the colourful Bo-Kaap area.

Overnight in Cape Town.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 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 Huguenot 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. If weather permits, we'll attempt to head up Table Mountain upon return to the City Bowl.

Overnight in Cape Town.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 13 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 surf-side 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. Depending on the season, we may stop at Boulders Beach to view a colony of South African penguins.

We complete our loop around the peninsula, past the well-watered eastern slopes of Table Mountain, Constantia, Bishop's Court and the campuses of the University of Cape Town. Here we pay a visit to 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!

Overnight in Cape Town.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Cape Town, South Africa - Fly to Windhoek, Namibia

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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.

Today you will meet our Namibia-based Tour Leader and enjoy a welcome dinner this evening.

Overnight in Windhoek.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Windhoek - Etosha National Park East

This morning we leave the capital and head north toward Etosha National Park* with lunch en route. Time-permitting, we may be able to have a little game drive in the park this afternoon after a break to settle in.

Etosha National Park covers 22,270 km², of which approximately 5,000 km² is 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 a 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 of the pans at 4,760 km² in extent. It is nowadays filled with water only when sufficient rain falls to the north in Angola, inducing floods to flow southward along the Cuvelai drainage system.

* Please note: Occasionally, due to operational reasons, this itinerary may operate in reverse.

Overnight in Etosha (East).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 16 Etosha National Park

The park consists of grassland, woodland and savannah. Game-viewing centers on the numerous springs and waterholes where several different species can often be seen at one time. The park boasts some 114 mammal and over 340 bird species. Wildlife that one might see includes elephant, lion, giraffe, blue wildebeest, eland, kudu, gemsbok (Oryx), zebra, rhino, cheetah, leopard, hyena, honey badger and warthog, as well as the endemic black faced impala.

Our day and lunch placement are somewhat free-form to take into account seasonal variations, weather, and travellers' interest.

Overnight at Etosha-East.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 17 Etosha National Park East - West

Today we re-locate to the park's western sector with a full day of game viewing along the way with a lunch stop en route.

Our route will likely take us via selected waterholes such as Goas, which are normally particularly good for game viewing, to the western gate, eventually leaving the park before sunset, arriving with enough time to relax and freshen up before for dinner.

Overnight Etosha West.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 18 Etosha - Damaraland

After an early breakfast the road takes us south into the wonderful and diverse heart of Damaraland where we will spend the next two nights at our lodge.

Damaraland is typified by displays of colour, magnificent table-top mountains, rock formations and bizarre-looking vegetation. The present day landscape has been formed by the erosion of wind, water and geological forces which have created rolling hills, dunes, gravel plains and ancient river terraces. It is the variety and loneliness of the area as well as the scenic splendor which will reward and astound you, giving one an authentic understanding of the word 'wilderness'.

If time allows this afternoon (or tomorrow if we are running late) we will visit the nearby attractions and geological sites of the pre-historic Twyfelfontein rock engravings (recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site). We will arrive in the late afternoon after a long yet rewarding day, with time to enjoy sundowners before dinner.

Overnight in Damaraland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 19 Damaraland Touring

Today is dedicated to exploring this remarkable and fascinating area with our guides. After an early breakfast we will be treated to a memorable 4x4 excursion along the ephemeral Aba Huab River valleys to explore this remarkable region and to search for game, including the elusive desert adapted elephants if they are in the area. Damaraland is home to a variety of desert adapted wildlife and hidden desert treasures. As the elephants are mostly active in the mornings we will normally have the best chance to see them then before returning to camp for lunch. However, if all travellers are in agreement, we could possibly take a picnic lunch and stop to enjoy that in the shade of a large Ana tree by the riverbed, ideally while watching a herd of elephant browsing nearby.

On return to camp there should be time to relax and enjoy some pre-dinner drinks while admiring the stunning views of our surroundings at sunset.

Overnight in Damaraland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 20 Damaraland - Swakopmund

Today our journey south continues, past Namibia's highest mountain, the Brandberg, which peaks at 2573m/8,440 ft above sea level, and take time to view game and absorb the vastness of the scenery along the way.

Our destination is 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.

We will have some time for a stroll around town before dinner.

Overnight in Swakopmund.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Swakopmund: Leisure Time & Optional Activities

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 may wish to participate in an optional activity, including "Living Desert" excursions of the amazingly diverse Namib Desert biosphere; marine cruises on the Walvis Bay lagoon and outer harbour, camel rides, and many more (your Tour Leader can advise on current pricing and book in advance once you arrive on the tour).

Overnight in Swakopmund.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Swakopmund - Namib-Naukluft Park

We continue our journey south toward Namib-Naukluft Park via Solitaire and the spectacular rocky Kuiseb Canyon (photo stops en route) -- with possible sightings of baboon, rock hyrax, or, if lucky, leopard.

We travel 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.

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. We will have a picnic lunch en route.

Overnight in the vicinity of the Namib-Naklauff National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 23 Namib-Naukluft 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-Naklauff 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

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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 Sossusvlei. 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.

We'll have a picnic breakfast en route and likely a late lunch upon return to our lodge.

Overnight at Namib-Naukluft.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 24 Namib-Naukluft - Windhoek

After a leisurely breakfast we set off on our journey back to Windhoek. The road takes us north through the spectacular Gamsberg Pass, through commercial farmlands to Namibia's central highlands, to reach Windhoek.

Overnight in Windhoek.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 25 Windhoek: City Touring

Today we have a half-day guided 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. 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 traditional crafts.

Overnight in Windhoek.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 26 Windhoek, Namibia - Fly to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Today we fly from Windhoek to Victoria Falls.

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

After settling into our hotel, we'll travel by road a short distance to the Zambezi River on which we will enjoy a scenic sunset cruise above the

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falls. The river here is wide and slow moving; be on the lookout for hippo, elephant, antelope, giraffe and myriad bird species for which the region is famous.

Overnight in Victoria Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 27 Victoria Falls Touring

Today we have a guided walking tour of Victoria Falls and adjacent national park.

Mosi-oa-Tunya ("The Smoke That Thunders") is one of the most amazing sights in the world: twice as high as Niagara Falls and several times longer. It took thousands of years of erosion for Victoria Falls to appear as and where it does now. During the Jurassic Period (150-200 million years ago), volcanic activity resulted in thick basalt deposits covering large parts of Southern Africa. As the lava cooled and solidified, cracks appeared in the hard basalt crust, which were filled with clay and lime. Erosion and the course of the mighty Zambezi River cut through these softer materials, forming the first of a series of waterfalls.

Our tour is conducted on level paved paths, much of which is shaded by the dense rainforest that exists due to spray from the falls. To walk to the farthest extent, with viewpoints along the way, is about one kilometre, the last part of which is without shade. We encourage you to go right to the dn, as the views are fantastic, including the best look at the famous Victoria Falls Bridge, the brainchild of Cecil Rhodes, part of his grand and unfulfilled Cape to Cairo railway scheme, even though he never visited the falls and died before construction of the bridge began.

The afternoon is yours to enjoy optional activities. You may relax by the pool, do some shopping in the village famous for local artisan crafts, or go sightseeing by micro-light aircraft or helicopter. Your guide can help plan your afternoon.

Overnight in Victoria Falls.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 28 Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe - Chobe National Park, Botswana

Today our overland journey continues across the border to nearby Botswana and Chobe National Park near the town of Kasane. The original inhabitants of what is now the park were the San people. They were hunter-gatherers who lived by moving from one area to another in search of water, wild fruits and wild animals. In 1967, the area was declared a national park, the first in Botswana.

A major feature of Chobe National Park is its elephant population, which is probably the largest in the world. This population covers most of northern Botswana plus north-western Zimbabwe and is currently estimated at around 100,000 individuals. This elephant population has been built up steadily from a few thousand since the early 1900s, having escaped the massive poaching that decimated other populations elsewhere on the continent during the 1970s and 1980s.

The Chobe elephants are migratory, making seasonal movements of up to 200 kilometres from the Chobe and Linyanti rivers where they concentrate in the dry season, to the pans in the south-east of the park, to which they disperse in the rains.

Overnight in Chobe Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 29 Chobe National Park

The Chobe National Park covers 10,566 sq km and has one of the greatest concentrations of game found on the African continent. This park has an amazing variety of habitats, ranging from floodplains, baobab, and mopane trees and acacia woodlands, to verdant flood grasslands and thickets bordering the Chobe River.

Our safari starts with a cruise on the Chobe River (shade and refreshments available), which takes us close to the waterfowl and wildlife on

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the river. Large flocks of birds, big pods of hippo and very large crocodiles can be viewed from the safety of your boat.

□

After lunch we board open (covered) safari vehicles and head off into the park to view some of the elephants, buffalo herds, sable, wildebeest, giraffe, and with luck, some resident lion and hyena.

□

Overnight in Chobe National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 30 Chobe Park - Fly to Okavango

Today we double back to Kasane from where we connect with our flight into the Okavango Delta.

□

Our comfortable lodge is centrally situated in the Okavango Delta, deep amongst grass covered islands. Most of our game viewing will be on foot and by mokoro (dug-out boat); without the noise of a vehicle you will experience the bush in it's true form and be at one with nature. The silence will allow you to pick up the previously unheard sounds of the bush usually hidden by the mechanical hum of a car. Motorboat excursions may also be available, as well as game viewing in 4x4 vehicles further afield, depending on water level.

□

** Please note that gratuities for camp staff and guide in the Okavango are NOT included in your tour price -- further details provided in your pre-trip notes once booked.

□

Overnight in the Okavango.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 31 Okavango Delta

We have a full day exploring the waterways of the Okavango Delta. Depending on water levels, we may do our sightseeing either by mokoro canoes or by 4WD vehicles, or a little of both.

□

The Okavango Delta is unique. It is the largest inland delta in the world; instead of flowing into the sea, the annual flood of fresh water flows inland, spreading over 15000 sq km of the Kalahari sand in a maze of lagoons and channels. The Okavango Delta is a lush wonderland surrounded by the arid Kalahari Desert and home to many species of antelope, such as Lechwe and Tsessebe. Herds of buffalo, zebra and elephant that number in their thousands pass through annually on their migration routes.

Overnight in the Okavango.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 32 Okavango Delta

We have another full day exploration of the wonders of the delta.

□

In the lush indigenous forests of the delta and its islands, and along the floodplains spawned by this great marriage of water and sand, more than 400 species of birds flourish. On the mainland and among the islands in the delta, lion, elephant, hyena, wild dog, buffalo, hippo and crocodile congregate with a teeming variety of antelope and other smaller animals -- warthog, mongoose, spotted genets, monkeys, bush babies and tree squirrels.

□

Fishing, bird watching, game viewing, photography or simple relaxation; indulging in any of these in the Okavango are experiences without parallel.

Overnight in the Okavango.

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Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 33 Okavango Delta - Fly to Maun - Departure

Today we fly to Maun, the main town and airport serving the Okavango region and connect with onward flights.

PLEASE NOTE: If you booking your own flights from Maun, we suggest that you ensure that your departure time is no earlier than 2:00 PM in order to account for our morning flight to Maun.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast