Tour Code
NA1

ADVENTURESABROAD

NAMIBIA

Deserts, Dunes, and Ancient Cultures

12 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Namibia

Arrival in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. Founded in 1840 as a hot springs settlement, Windhoek grew into a colonial administrative centre and today serves as the country's political and economic heart. The city's architecture reflects its German colonial past, with Lutheran churches and turn-of-the-century buildings standing alongside modern office blocks.

This evening we meet our Namibia-based Tour Leader and fellow travellers for a welcome dinner.

NOTE: Due to space availability and other considerations, our Namibia itinerary may run in reverse order (Windhoek to Windhoek).

Overnight in Windhoek.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Windhoek - Namib-Naukluft National Park

After breakfast we leave the interior plateau and head southwest through the Gamsberg Pass toward the Namib Desert. The landscape shifts dramatically as we descend — from grasslands to rock formations and eventually to the dunes that define this ancient desert. The Gamsberg Pass itself offers sweeping views across multiple climate zones, a reminder of the elevation we're losing as we drop from the central highlands toward the coast.

In the Nama language, Namib means "vast" — an apt description for this expanse of sand that stretches along Namibia's entire 1,500-kilometre (930-mile) coastline. The Namib is considered one of the world's oldest deserts, with arid or semi-arid conditions persisting for at least 55 million years. The Sossusvlei dunes, at 300 metres (1,000 feet), rank among the world's highest — considerably taller than their nearest rivals in Arabia.

Animals, insects, and plants have adapted remarkably to survive here. The Namib beetle collects moisture by standing on its head in the early morning fog, allowing water droplets to run down its back to its mouth. The welwitschia plant, which can live over 1,000 years, survives on fog alone. En route we watch for kudu, springbok, gemsbok, and black eagles against the desert backdrop.

We stop several times for photos before arriving at our lodge this afternoon. The surrounding landscape — multi-hued sands, twisted acacia trees, and expansive views — offers excellent sunset-watching opportunities. We'll have a picnic lunch en route.

Overnight in the vicinity of Namib-Naukluft National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Namib-Naukluft National Park

Very early this morning we drive into the park to Sossusvlei, a dried-up pan at the base of the Namib's most impressive dunes. The morning sun illuminates the apricot-coloured sands, with long shadows emphasizing the graceful curves of the dune crests. The older the dune, the richer its colour — the result of slow iron oxidation and minute garnet fragments.

We have plenty of time to walk among the dunes, scale one or two for panoramic views, and visit Dead Vlei. This surreal pan takes its name from the blackened dead acacia trees that rise from its white surface, set against towering orange dunes — a photographer's dream. The scale dwarfs human presence; footprints look like insect trails, and each step creates a mini sand-slide. Possible wildlife sightings include oryx antelope, springbok, and ostrich.

On our return we stop at Sesriem Canyon near the park entrance. Early inhabitants relied on this water source during dry periods, when deep clefts in the rock reduced evaporation. The name comes from the Afrikaans "ses" (six) and "riem" (thong) — explorers needed six leather thongs tied together to lower a bucket to the water. The canyon was carved by the Tsauchab River over millions of years, leaving ledges now

inhabited by pigeons, pied crows, and starlings.

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

Overnight in the vicinity of Namib-Naukluft National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Namib-Naukluft Park - Swakopmund

This morning we continue north through Namib-Naukluft Park via Solitaire, a tiny settlement that serves as the last fuel stop before the dunes. The journey takes us through the rocky Kuiseb Canyon, carved by the Kuiseb River as it cuts through ancient rock formations on its way to the Atlantic. We make photo stops en route and watch for baboons, rock hyraxes clinging to cliff faces, and, if fortunate, leopards that inhabit these rocky outcrops.

Our destination is Swakopmund, Namibia's second-largest town and traditional "summer capital." The drive is approximately 350 kilometres (220 miles), with the landscape transforming from desert interior to the foggy coastal zone. Approaching Swakopmund through the Namib Desert creates one of travel's more surreal impressions — Bavarian spires and Germanic architecture emerge through the fog banks that typically blanket the town in morning and late afternoon. The Atlantic surf pounds the notorious Skeleton Coast beyond, an ever-present reminder of the ocean's power.

The town blends old Bavaria with contemporary Africa in unexpected ways. Herero women in Victorian dress — a legacy of 19th-century missionary influence — share the streets with descendants of German settlers, artists, miners, and safari operators. The architecture ranges from elaborate turn-of-the-century buildings to modern shops and restaurants. Palm-lined streets and carefully tended gardens give the town an almost Mediterranean feel, despite the chilly ocean currents offshore.

We'll have time for a stroll before dinner, perhaps along the jetty where anglers try their luck, or through the craft markets near the lighthouse.

Overnight in Swakopmund.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Swakopmund: Leisure Time & Optional Activities

Today is free to explore Swakopmund at your own pace. The town offers an intriguing contrast — a corner of old Bavaria wedged between one of the world's harshest deserts and its most treacherous coastlines. Browse the shops along the main street, relax at a café, or visit the local museum to learn more about the region's history.

Optional activities include "Living Desert" excursions to explore the Namib's surprising biodiversity, marine cruises on Walvis Bay lagoon to see seals and dolphins, scenic flights over the desert and coast, or camel rides along the beach. Your Tour Leader can advise on current pricing and help arrange bookings.

Overnight in Swakopmund.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Swakopmund - Damaraland

After an early breakfast we head north and east into Damaraland, one of Namibia's most geologically diverse regions. We pass Namibia's highest mountain, the Brandberg, which peaks at 2,573 metres (8,442 feet) above sea level. The massif is named for its glowing appearance at sunrise and sunset, when the granite reflects shades of red and orange. The mountain is also home to Namibia's most famous rock art site — the "White Lady" painting, though we won't visit it today.

We take time to watch for wildlife and absorb the vastness of the scenery as we make our way to Huab Under Canvas, our specially erected tented camp for the next two nights. This semi-permanent camp offers comfortable accommodation in the heart of the wilderness, allowing us to minimize our environmental footprint while maximizing our safari experience.

Damaraland displays remarkable geological diversity — table-top mountains, rock formations, and hardy vegetation create a landscape shaped by wind, water, and millennia of erosion. Rolling hills give way to dunes, gravel plains, and ancient river terraces. The region takes its name from the Damara people who have lived here for centuries, adapting to one of Africa's harshest environments. It's the variety and remoteness of the area, as much as its scenic grandeur, that provides an authentic wilderness experience.

If time permits this afternoon (or tomorrow if we're running late), we'll visit the pre-historic Twyfelfontein rock engravings, recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These engravings, created over thousands of years, depict animals, human figures, and abstract designs. We arrive in the late afternoon with time to enjoy sundowners before dinner.

Overnight in Damaraland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Damaraland Touring

Today we explore this remarkable region with our guides. After an early breakfast we embark on a 4x4 excursion along the ephemeral Aba Huab River valleys to search for desert-adapted elephants and other wildlife. Damaraland's hidden treasures include various desert-adapted species that have evolved to survive in this harsh environment.

The elephants are most active in the mornings, giving us the best chance to observe them before returning to camp for lunch. However, if all travellers are in agreement, we could take a picnic lunch and stop in the shade of a large ana tree by the riverbed — ideally while watching a herd of elephants browsing nearby. On return to camp there should be time to relax and enjoy sundowners while watching the sunset over this dramatic landscape.

Overnight in Damaraland.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Damaraland - Etosha National Park

This morning after breakfast we continue our safari to Etosha National Park, one of Africa's premier wildlife destinations. The drive takes us through changing landscapes as we leave the rocky terrain of Damaraland and enter the flatter bushveld that characterizes the approaches to Etosha. Located in northwestern Namibia, the park centres on the vast Etosha Pan — a 130-kilometre (80-mile) long salt pan that dominates the landscape and can even be seen from space.

This pan is the remnant of an ancient lake that dried up thousands of years ago, leaving behind a crust of salt and minerals. During rare good rainy seasons, the pan fills with a few centimetres of water, attracting thousands of flamingos and other water birds. Most years, however, it remains a shimmering white expanse that creates mirages and reflects the intense African sun. The name "Etosha" comes from the Oshiwambo language and means "great white place" — an accurate description of the pan's appearance.

The park was established as a game reserve in the early 20th century and declared a national park in 1970. Today it ranks among Namibia's most popular destinations, attracting visitors with its unique landscapes and abundant wildlife. The park covers 22,270 square kilometres (8,600 square miles) and supports 114 mammal species and over 340 bird species.

We have lunch en route, and if time permits this afternoon, our guide will take us on a game drive into Etosha, exiting before the gates close at sunset. The rest of the evening can be spent watching wildlife at our camp's floodlit waterhole — a peaceful way to end the day as animals come to drink under the stars.

Overnight at Etosha (West).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Etosha National Park West

Today we embark on a full-day safari through the central and western sections of Etosha National Park from the comfort of our private vehicle. The park's landscape seamlessly blends grasslands, savannas, and woodlands, each supporting different wildlife communities. Grasslands with scattered acacias provide habitat for grazing animals like zebras and antelopes, while the savannas' open woodlands shelter giraffes, elephants, lions, and hyenas. Denser woodlands offer shade and cover for leopards and cheetahs.

Etosha is renowned for its wildlife diversity, with over 114 mammal species calling the park home. We watch for iconic species like elephants, lions, giraffes, and zebras, as well as the endangered black rhinoceros and elusive leopard. The park also hosts over 340 bird species, including eagles, vultures, and ostriches. The unique geology and hydrology have created varied habitats — from salt pans and waterholes to rocky outcrops and sandy dunes — that support this remarkable biodiversity.

As we explore, we focus on the numerous springs and waterholes where multiple species often gather simultaneously, providing excellent viewing opportunities.

Overnight at Etosha (West).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Etosha National Park East

Today we bid farewell to our current camp and travel eastward across Etosha National Park. With a full day of game viewing ahead, we take our time navigating the park's diverse landscape of grassland, woodland, and savannah. The eastern section of the park tends to be less visited than the central and western areas, often providing more solitary wildlife encounters.

We focus on the numerous springs and waterholes where wildlife congregates — often multiple species at once — providing fantastic photographic opportunities. Etosha's waterholes are legendary among wildlife photographers. Each has its own character: some attract primarily elephants, others are favoured by predators, and still others become gathering places for plains game. The dry season (May through October) offers the most concentrated wildlife viewing as animals must visit water daily.

We might spot an elephant's massive frame silhouetted against the horizon, a pride of lions resting in the shade during the heat of the day, or a giraffe browsing acacia leaves with its characteristic grace. Other wildlife we might encounter includes blue wildebeest, eland, kudu, and the distinctive gemsbok with its rapier-straight horns. Etosha is also one of the best places in Africa to see the endangered black rhinoceros, which has been successfully protected here for decades.

Bird life is equally impressive, with secretary birds stalking through the grasslands, martial eagles surveying from treetops, and, if we're lucky, ostriches striding across the plains with their awkward yet effective gait.

Tonight we overnight at a camp in the eastern sector of the park.

Overnight at Etosha (East).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Etosha - Windhoek

After a leisurely breakfast, we bid farewell to the wilderness and journey back to Windhoek through the central highlands. The scenic road takes us through rolling hills, verdant valleys, and commercial farmlands that showcase Namibia's agricultural sector. Along the way we pass unique rock formations, streams, and rural villages.

We stop at Lake Otjikoto, a tranquil oasis in the highlands where we might spot herons, egrets, kingfishers, and other water birds. The serene atmosphere provides a peaceful break from our journey.

Next we visit the town of Okahandja to explore the local woodcarver's craft market. This marketplace offers unique souvenirs, handmade crafts, and authentic Namibian artifacts — an excellent opportunity to browse for last-minute mementos of your safari.

As we arrive in Windhoek this evening, we'll have time to reflect on our unforgettable experiences.

Overnight in Windhoek.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Departure

Today we depart from Windhoek.

PLEASE NOTE: From 2027 onward this tour will become one day long, ending one day later. Once our 2026 tours conclude, this itinerary and pricing will be updated.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast