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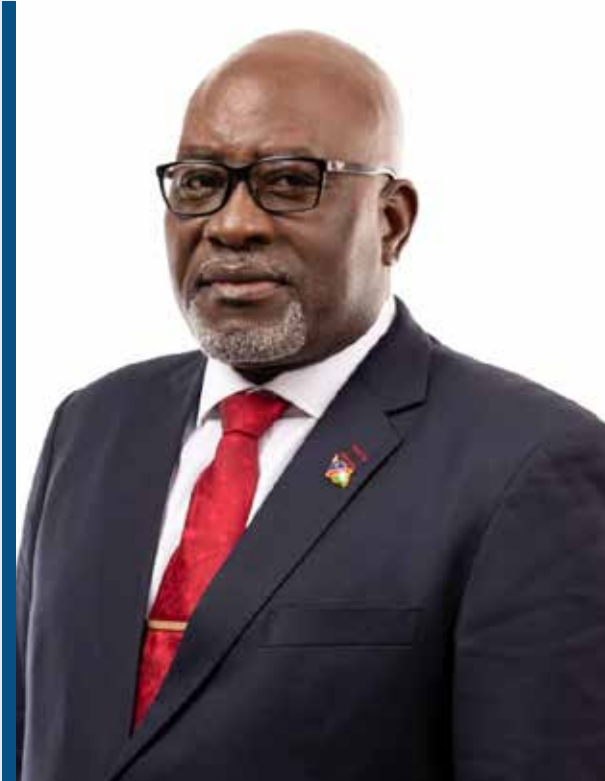
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Hands That Build a Nation

*Behind Namibia's industries are
the people whose labour, sacrifice
and ambition shape our future*

Dear readers,

The lives of many successful Namibians have been built upon the bedrock of our industries. Deep within the dusty streets of this nation, stories of perseverance, sacrifice and ambition continue to shape the social fabric that makes Namibia admired across the world. Behind every product manufactured, every mineral extracted, and every enterprise built lies the labour and determination of ordinary people striving for a better future.

Namibia is not a nation admired by chance.

She is a country built by hands determined to realise the dream of shared prosperity. She has been shaped through endurance, relentless sacrifice, and the determination of extraordinary people who refused to surrender their hope for tomorrow.

The soul of our nation's industries is breathed into them by her people. They reflect a society willing to invest today for a stronger tomorrow. Our land carries both a promise and a responsibility, and today Namibia stands among Africa's most resource-rich nations.

Mining remains one of the most important contributors to our economy, consistently accounting for a significant share of export earnings and foreign direct investment. Namibia is one of the world's leading uranium producers and is internationally respected for its diamond industry, particularly offshore marine diamond recovery, regarded as among the most technologically advanced mining operations anywhere in the world.

Beyond diamonds and uranium, Namibia possesses substantial deposits of zinc, copper, gold, lithium, manganese, lead, tin, rare earth elements, and other critical minerals increasingly required for the global energy transition. Recent discoveries in the Kunene Region have once again reminded us of the extraordinary geological potential that still lies within Namibia's landscapes.

At the same time, our nation is emerging within entirely new economic frontiers.

The discovery of offshore oil and gas reserves along Namibia's southern coastline has attracted major international attention, while green industrial development projects have positioned Namibia as a potential future supplier of clean energy to global markets. Combined with some of the highest solar radiation levels in the world and vast wind potential along our coastline, Namibia possesses strategic advantages few nations can replicate.

Yet history teaches us something important: natural resources alone do not guarantee national prosperity. As a nation, we must therefore remain guided by long-term thinking. Around the world, countries blessed with immense mineral wealth have at times struggled with inequality, instability, environmental degradation, corruption, and economic dependence. Others, however, transformed resource wealth into education, infrastructure, industrial growth, sovereign wealth, and long-term national stability.

The difference has never been the resource itself, but the manner of its stewardship. And this is where Namibia now stands. The true value of development is measured not only by what is taken from the earth and built upon it, but also by what is ultimately left behind for future generations. Every tonne exported, every barrel discovered, every mineral extracted, and every investment agreement signed carries with it a responsibility not only to today's economy, but also to the Namibia that future generations will one day inherit.

Our progress must be guided by responsible leadership that seeks the best for Namibia and her people. This land, its resources, and ultimately its future belong to every Namibian.

Let us get to work. 🇳🇲



Somewhere Along the Way...

GERHARD FOURIE

Africa Sales And Marketing Manager

Ondili Lodges Namibia



Dear readers,

There is a moment that happens to many people in Namibia. It is usually not during the big moments people expect.

Not necessarily when they first see the dunes, spot wildlife, or stand at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean where the desert disappears into the sea.

It happens somewhere in between.

Along a long gravel road. Over a conversation around a fire. In the silence before sunset. In the stillness of a landscape so open that it feels as though the world has finally slowed down for a while.

And somewhere along the way, Namibia stops feeling like just another place you are visiting.

On paper, Namibia offers almost every element people dream of when they imagine Africa, all within one country: deserts, bushveld, wildlife, wetlands, coastlines, ancient cultures, remarkable food and wines, and landscapes that seem too vast to fully comprehend.

But what many travellers tend to remember most about Namibia is not only what they saw, but the way the country made them feel while they were here.

Something about this country changes people's pace. It reminds us what silence sounds like again. It makes us notice things we would normally rush past: changing light, distant thunderstorms, the smell of rain on dry earth, or the warmth of people welcoming you like family, even in the most remote places.

Perhaps that is why so many people arrive here searching for adventure, yet leave carrying something entirely different with them. Travellers often leave Namibia feeling calmer, more present, and with a renewed perspective on everyday life.

As someone fortunate enough to work within Africa's

tourism and hospitality industry, I have come to realise that what we truly share with travellers is not only destinations, beautiful lodges, or carefully planned itineraries.

This industry also plays an important role in supporting conservation, local communities, and the preservation of the places that make Namibia so special.

And through that, people leave with memories and experiences that stay with them for years.

The people within this industry understand that deeply.

The guides who tell stories beneath open skies. The reservation teams carefully shaping journeys behind computer screens late into the evening. The lodge staff welcoming guests after long days on the road. The drivers, travel designers, conservationists, agents, chefs, hosts, and partners across the Land of the Brave who dedicate their lives to creating experiences people will remember forever.

Many of you know my heart and my love for Namibia. Not simply because it is a beautiful country, but because of what it does to people.

I have seen how quickly Namibia brings people together in ways that feel increasingly rare today. Exhausted travellers often begin to slow down after only a few days in our open spaces. Guests may arrive with a checklist of places to see, but often leave remembering the emotions they experienced while travelling through Namibia.

Maybe that is why this country leaves such a lasting impression on travellers; there is something deeply genuine about Namibia.

And for those of us lucky enough to call this country home, or fortunate enough to share it with the world every day, that may be the most extraordinary thing about it. 🌍

earth



ON THE COVER:

Robert Pool's striking black-and-white photograph of a black rhino speaks to Namibia's earth, silence and scale. Read *Anthropologists charmed by Namibia's light, emptiness and silence* on page 56.



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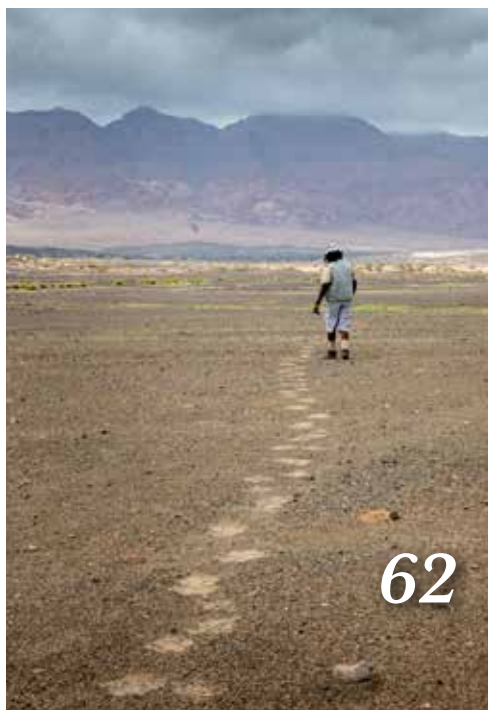


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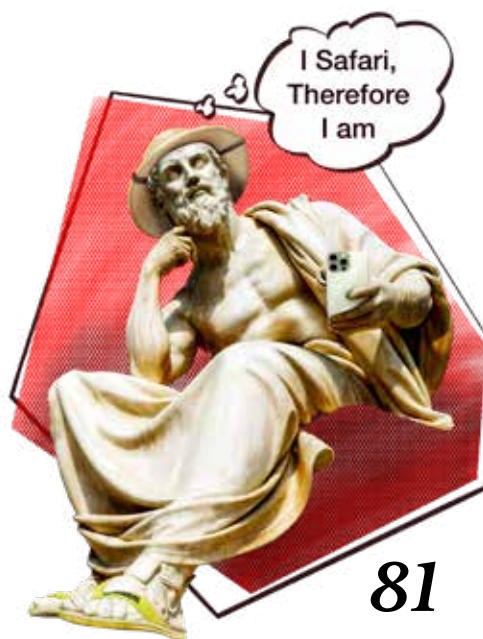
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Where the Edge of Etosha Becomes Private

A Journey Into Southern Cross Private Game Reserve



There are places in Namibia that announce themselves immediately, with spectacle, scale and a kind of obvious grandeur. And then there are places that reveal themselves more slowly, with the quiet assurance of somewhere that has never needed to perform for attention. Southern Cross Private Game Reserve belongs to the latter.

Situated some 40 kilometres outside Kamanjab on the road to Opuwo, at the threshold of Damaraland and within reach of Etosha, Southern Cross occupies a landscape of immense stillness and arresting beauty. Here, the horizon seems to loosen and drift endlessly outward. Grassland opens toward water. Wildlife moves through the day with an ancient sense of rhythm. And the silence, when it comes, is not empty but alive, layered with birdsong, wind and the occasional distant call from the bush.

What distinguishes Southern Cross is not simply its setting, though the setting is extraordinary. It is the rare intimacy of the experience. This is not a lodge in the traditional sense, with the subtle choreography of strangers arriving, departing and crossing paths in shared spaces. Southern Cross receives one family or one group of friends at a time, and that singular decision changes everything. The reserve is not merely visited; it is inhabited. For the duration of a stay, one steps into a private world, with all the ease, freedom and quiet privilege that such seclusion affords.

There is something unusually compelling about that feeling. One does not move through Southern Cross as a hotel guest, but with the deeper ease of someone welcomed into the life of a private estate. The days take on a different texture. They lengthen. They breathe. Mornings begin with the soft rising chorus of birdlife and the pale, gradual spill

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An African elephant has around 150,000 muscles in its trunk alone.



of first light across the land. By evening, the atmosphere gathers into something altogether more cinematic: firelight flickering against stone and thatch, the last glow withdrawing from the sky, the wilderness beginning to sound more distinctly like itself.

At the heart of the reserve, a vast thatched lapa overlooks a natural lake whose surface shifts with the hour and the weather. It is from here, especially at dusk, that Southern Cross seems to gather its emotional force. As daylight thins and darkness begins to settle around the water, the reserve becomes a place of silhouettes, murmurs and distant movement. Hyena calls carry through the night air. Animals come down to drink. Above it all, the sky stretches clear and immense, strewn with stars so bright and numerous that they appear almost improbably close.

Luxury, here, is not worn ostentatiously. It is felt in space, in calm, in the sense that everything has been considered without anything having been overstated. The accommodations reflect that same sensibility, each offering its own relationship to the landscape and to the experience of staying on the reserve.

The White House, a colonial-style residence, is perhaps the most immediately striking in its composure. A four-bedroom private house in crisp white tones, it has the polished serenity of a place designed for retreat in the fullest sense of the word. Each bedroom is ensuite, while the master suite includes a walk-in closet. Spacious yet restrained, elegant without excess, it lends itself naturally to families or close groups who want not only comfort, but the deeper luxury of feeling entirely at home in an extraordinary setting.

Then there is the Palace, the reserve's most elevated and distinguished private retreat. This is the residence that seems instinctively suited to the principal guest, the one around whom the rest of a family gathering or private party might quietly arrange itself. With its infinity pool, private gym, walk-in closet, multiple decks and beautifully resolved interiors, the Palace offers a heightened register of privacy and indulgence. Yet even here, the emphasis is never on separation from the landscape, but on a more intimate conversation with it: views unfolding outward, stillness pressing close, the wild always just beyond the edge of comfort.



The Reserve Chalets bring a different mood again. More understated, but no less thoughtful, they offer warmth, ease and a gently traditional safari sensibility. Their outlook over the grassland and lake, where animals move in and out of view with unhurried grace, lends them a tranquillity that feels entirely in keeping with the larger spirit of the reserve.

Yet for all the beauty of its interiors, Southern Cross is not a place defined by accommodation alone. Its deepest impressions are made out on the land itself, in the unscripted moments that arrive between departures and returns, between the expectation of an outing and what the bush unexpectedly gives.

One of the reserve's most unforgettable rituals is the sundowner drive into the mountains, where the land rises and opens in immense, sweeping layers. In that amber hour, with the light softening over the plains and the air beginning to cool, the landscape seems to acquire an even greater dignity. On one such descent, the drama of the

evening sharpened suddenly into something unforgettable: a group of white rhino moving behind the vehicle at speed, their breath audible in the dusk, their muscular presence both exhilarating and strangely intimate. It was one of those encounters that leaves language slightly behind, not because it was spectacular, though it was, but because it felt so immediate and unmediated by performance.

Wildlife on the reserve includes roan, sable, springbok, zebra, white rhino and elephant, among many others, and what is striking is not only the abundance, but the setting in which these sightings occur. Southern Cross does not offer the compressed experience of checking animals off a list. It allows the drama of the natural world to emerge within a landscape that already feels charged with atmosphere.

There is history here, too, written into the stone. High in the mountains lies a cave once used by San communities more than 3,000 years ago, where ancient carvings remain visible to this day. Reached with experienced guides, it introduces another dimension to the reserve, reminding one

A zebra can have anywhere from roughly 25 to more than 80 stripes, depending on the species and the individual animal.

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that this land has long held human meaning, memory and movement far older than any contemporary idea of safari.

The hospitality at Southern Cross is equally shaped by a sense of occasion. Meals are not simply served; they are placed, timed and composed with care. Lunch may appear beneath trees, beside the water, or on higher ground where the view does half the work of conversation. Much of what reaches the table comes directly from the reserve itself, including produce from its gardens and ingredients from its own livestock and butchery. The result is not a rehearsed version of farm-to-table, but something more grounded and convincing, where provenance is part of daily life rather than a borrowed philosophy.

And then, unexpectedly, there are the wine cellars. One of them lies behind an original 1905 New York bank vault door, opening into a sealed subterranean space that feels less like a cellar than a private world of its own. Part wine room, part intimate entertaining salon, it brings together rare whiskies, fine wines, deep leather seating and the quiet glamour of a beautifully composed retreat. In another

setting, such a detail might have seemed improbable. At Southern Cross, it feels entirely in keeping with the reserve's layered, idiosyncratic character.

Perhaps that is what lingers most. Southern Cross is not simply luxurious, though it is unquestionably that. Nor is it merely exclusive, though privacy here is among its rarest and most defining pleasures. It is, rather, a place that restores the romance of inhabiting a landscape rather than merely passing through it. It invites a slower surrender to silence, distance, comfort and wildness. And in doing so, it offers something increasingly difficult to find in the modern world: the sensation of stepping outside the ordinary altogether.

At a time when so much high-end travel has become polished into predictability, Southern Cross remains gloriously harder to classify. Private yet expansive, refined yet deeply rooted in the land, it offers not only escape, but a different way of being in the wilderness. One leaves with the impression not simply of having stayed somewhere beautiful, but of having briefly belonged to it. 🌿

For bookings, please contact Shaun Links at +264 81 288 6321 or shaun@cpam.co.na



Am Weinberg – Namibia’s Only True Five-Star Lifestyle Estate

*A refined residential retreat overlooking
Windhoek’s most exclusive valley*



Am Weinberg prestigious residential estate offers an unparalleled lifestyle in a supremely secure oasis, with the most spectacular views over and beyond the city of Windhoek.

The landmark Am Weinberg residential estate hugs the contours of Roman Hill in the well-established, sought-after Klein Windhoek Valley, an exclusive enclave which offers the most spectacular views. On an estate two hectares in size, Am Weinberg is intentionally designed as a fully integrated lifestyle environment, and the scale allows for a high level of control, maintenance, and an uncompromising approach to world-class security. Am Weinberg operates its own dedicated, estate-wide security team, covering both the residential areas and the broader estate.

At the heart of Am Weinberg is a curated mix of world-class facilities, integrated across the estate rather than centralised in a single clubhouse. The facilities include The Weinberg, an iconic five-star hotel; three of Windhoek's most sought-after restaurants of different culinary styles – Butcher's Block, Olivia's Kitchen, and Cape Town Fish Market; a full-service Life Day Spa; and a well-appointed conference centre. Residents can access both the spa and the hotel gym through membership.

There are 22 contemporary residential properties in total, with a strong architectural emphasis on clean, contemporary lines and terraced forms that maximise views across the valley. The estate consists of fourteen spacious 430 square metre villas positioned at the top of the estate, and eight more compact terrace homes located just below them along the slope of the valley. Both property types are designed as high-end, stylish townhouses with individual splash pools, private terraces or outdoor areas, and an architectural language which speaks to the breathtaking hillside setting and views across the valley. Am Weinberg's executive villas are offered furnished or unfurnished on a long-term rental agreement.

As Namibia's only true five-star lifestyle estate, Am Weinberg combines residential living with a superlatively diverse lifestyle. This effectively creates an environment where residents can live, work, and entertain within a single secure estate. At Am Weinberg, the result is a refined, self-contained community that balances convenience with sophistication.

Rental Rates

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Desert Solitaire

It takes a day, maybe even two, before your synapses sync to the circadian rhythms of the surreal Namibrand landscape. Jacques Marais recently visited Natural Selection's Kwessi Dunes Camp in the reserve, and rates it as one of Africa's unmatched photographic destinations



Michelangelo

—PHOTO ESSAY—



Because the Night ...

Well after midnight, a contorted Boscia foetida tree stands beneath the star-heavy Namibian sky. Shot on tripod with a 30-second exposure and subtle light-painting to reveal the tree's form.

Michelangelo

—PHOTO ESSAY—



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Shards of brittle savanna grass snap under the soles of my boots as I wander beyond the warm glow of illumination spilling from Kwessi Dunes Lodge. At first, the darkness beyond this cocoon of light feels squid-ink black, but within seconds my pupils begin to recalculate.

Reflected within the celestial glow of billions of stars, the Namibrand landscape fades up bit by bit from the all-encompassing night. Bone-dry tussocks of dune grass reveal against the blood-orange sand, and here and there, a lone camelthorn tree scrapes against the scintillating night sky.

I had scouted the vast Kwessi plain earlier, but the landscape feels extra extraterrestrial under the cover of the night. Up above, the Southern Cross and Milky Way glitter zirconia bright, seemingly close enough for you to swirl your hand and stir up a gazillion stars.

I stand for a moment, letting the desert aroma waft over me on the evening breeze...the rusted metal tang of dust and desiccated grass. A popcorny hint of antelope, most likely gemsbok. And in the background, the rancid whiff of *Boscia foetida*, or if you will, the smelly shepherd's tree.

A leopard can carry over 2,000 rosettes and spots across its body, with no two patterns ever being exactly alike.

Michelangelo

—PHOTO ESSAY—



(on the previous page) Boesman Kopje NamibRand's magic hour turns the desert outcrops into quiet, sculptural forms. Shot after sunset on tripod, using a four-second exposure and high ISO for a grainy, filmic feel.

(above) Peringuey Adder Also known as the Namibian sidewinder, this tiny desert predator disappears into the sand with only its eyes exposed. A macro lens captured the detail safely from striking distance in soft dawn light.

(inset right) Desert Details - Dune Cricket A small desert insect moves across the warm NamibRand sand, its delicate form caught in shallow focus. Up close, the desert reveals a quieter world of texture, adaptation and fragile movement.



Michelangelo

—PHOTO ESSAY—



Oryx Deconstructed A lone gemsbok crossed the Kwessi Plains in early morning light, framed against a minimalist desert landscape. A slow shutter speed added motion blur, giving the image a more abstract, painterly feel.

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Desert Watcher A black-backed jackal pauses in a wash of red NamibRand sand, half-hidden by the heat-softened foreground. The shallow focus gives the image a quiet, watchful tension — a brief desert encounter before it slips away.

A giraffe can have around 200–400 patches on its body, and every pattern is unique.

Michelangelo

—PHOTO ESSAY—



Into the Light A game-drive vehicle traces a narrow track through the Kwessi landscape at golden hour. The low sun turns the plains and mountains into layers of shadow, dust and glowing desert light.



Eagle Owl A giant eagle owl lifted from a Boscia tree at midday, offering a rare view of a nocturnal hunter in daylight. Fast shutter speed and eye-tracking helped capture the stillness.

Despite their odour – imagine rutting goats that’s been at it for days – the Boscia specimens are my favourite desert trees. They eke out a tenuous existence on these arid Namibrand plains, and make for exceptional astrophotography subjects.

My chosen Boscia rises up like a bent and broken skeleton against the heavens. It is a botanical spectre straight from a Tim Burton film, with contorted roots clawing monster-like into the desert substrate. Smooth and grey bark glimmers in the wan light, interspersed with fissures and cracks, all along the main trunk, with the branches ending in fang-like spines.

Motionless - like an ancient and emaciated wizard – the Boscia looms while I set up my tripod, and it is as if I can feel that arid Kwessi plain spinning end over end through the solar system. While I wait, I sit down in the sand, and let the keening calls of black-backed jackal wash over me. 🌀

Jacques Marais is an African storyteller, award-winning photographer and filmmaker and journalist, with more than a dozen books and travel guides to his name. He has travelled far and wide as a freelance photojournalist, covering extreme sport, conservation and eco-tourism destinations and stories in countries as diverse as Greenland, Rwanda, Outer Mongolia, Bolivia, Central African Republic, and Rodrigues Island. Marais and his family recently moved to a ‘peace’ of indigenous woods along the Garden Route post, where he is working on a new book, ‘The Secret Forest’. Follow him on @jacqmaraisphoto, or at www.jacquesmarais.co.za

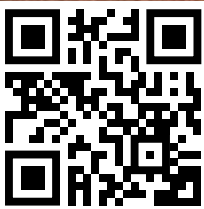
Contact for Kwessi Dunes: www.naturalselectiontravel.com

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LEISURE

NAMIBIA THROUGH OUR EYES

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THE ARCHITECTURE

OF SILENCE

Listen to what the vastness has to say.

There is a particularly unique quality to winter and its accompanying silence in Namibia. It is not the silence of absence, of things missing or withheld. It is something deeper than that. More reflective. The kind of silence that has been here for millennia and knows it has nothing to prove.

When the rains withdraw and the air loses its weight, something shifts in the landscape. The light hardens. The sky deepens to a blue you don't see in cities, hard and clear and very far away. The land sharpens into focus, as though it has been waiting for the haze to clear before revealing what it really looks like.

This is winter in Namibia. And for those who know how to be still inside it, it is one of the most extraordinary experiences on earth.



DESERT SILENCE

In the Namib, silence has texture. Step onto the sundowner platform at **Le Mirage Sossusvlei** as the last of the day's light drains from the desert floor and you will understand this instinctively. The dunes and the desert absorb sound the way they absorb heat – slowly and completely. What remains is not nothing. It is everything stripped back.

The lodge rises from this landscape with the composed improbability of a dream. A castle of warm stone and courtyard shadow, its walls holding the cool air of an oasis against the desert's ancient indifference. Inside, gourmet dinners unfold beneath the weight of a Milky Way, impossibly dense and crystal clear. Above, two open-air tower rooms offer the most honest sleeping arrangement imaginable: a bed, the stars and nothing in between.



The Namib is the oldest desert on earth. To spend a winter night within it is to exist, briefly, at a scale that makes human time feel approximate. This scale recharges something in the body and the mind quietyens without being asked. The silence, it turns out, was not empty – it was waiting.



THE SOUND OF EARTH

Eighty-five kilometres from Windhoek, the Otjivera Mountains hold their own kind of quiet. At **Midgard**, winter arrives as a cooling and a clearing. Temperatures drop to single figures in the early morning, the air carrying the clean mineral smell of granite and dry grass. The mountains do not perform. They simply stand, as they have since long before anyone thought to give them a name.

Built in 1937 on a 12,000-hectare estate, Midgard was envisaged as a sanctuary where the outside world was not necessarily excluded, but rather simply forgotten. That intention still holds. Game drives wind through the reserve as giraffes are silhouetted against the sky and warhogs 'mow' the lawn on the vast greens. Hiking trails open into vistas that feel unwitnessed. On the hilltop at sundowner, the world extends in every direction without interruption, a 360-degree panorama that makes the ordinary business of thinking feel briefly unnecessary.





Silence.
Stillness.
Connection.
Scan here.

The lodge wears its history quietly – the Swakop River meanders along, old farming buildings still in use, Sven's Kegelbahn a reminder that people have been coming here to unwind for a very long time. In the evenings, The Barn restaurant draws the warmth inward, while outside, the mountains lose their edges and become shapes against a sky that seems to hold more stars than anywhere else.

"We believe that a genuine connection begins when the noise stops. Our guests come to Namibia for many reasons, but what stays with them, what they carry home, is the feeling of having been truly still for the first time in a long time."



**Franziska Rüeck -
Chief Experience
Officer, OL Group**



Silence is not a passive thing. It is an environment that Namibia builds more convincingly, more completely, than almost anywhere else on earth. Winter refines it further. The air clears. The light clarifies and the sky opens in a way that cities make you forget is possible.

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Elevate every slice

For many who travel to Namibia, the itinerary writes itself: the red dunes at Sossusvlei, desert-adapted wildlife and the shipwrecks and whale bones at Skeleton Coast. Yet, beyond these undeniable highlights lies a pioneering form of community-based tourism that offers an antidote to passive observation.

At the heart of this movement are Namibia's Living Museums. Paired with Gondwana Collection Namibia's eco-conscious lodges, which serve as deliberate gateways to these cultural encounters, they create journeys of rare depth and authenticity.



NAMIBIA'S LIVING MUSEUMS: BEYOND THE SAFARI VEHICLE

The Living Museum concept is an act of cultural sovereignty. It provides a platform where indigenous groups such as the OvaHimba, the Damara, the Aawambo and the Mbunza are the curators, educators, and principal beneficiaries. Here, culture is not a static exhibit behind glass but an expression of daily life, ancestral skills, and oral history.

Damara Mopane Lodge and The Damara Living Museum

Amongst the organ pipes, petrified forests, desert-adapted elephants and rock engravings lies the cultural richness of the Damara people, one of Namibia's oldest ethnic groups.

The Damara Living Museum brings to life the skills of a pre-colonial hunter-gatherer and metal-working society. Visitors may find themselves listening to the complex clicks of the Khoekhoegowab language or discovering the medicinal uses of desert plants. Leatherwork and blacksmithing demonstrations reveal a depth of knowledge shaped by life in an unforgiving environment.

Located between towering granite boulders, this open-air museum is just 115km from Damara Mopane Lodge.

The OvaHimba and Omarunga Epupa-Falls Camp

Amid the Makalani palms of the Kunene Region lives one of Africa's last semi-nomadic pastoralist communities.

A visit to an OvaHimba village is a journey into one of continent's most iconic and resilient cultures.

Renowned for their profound connection to the land, the OvaHimba are instantly recognisable by otjize - a paste of butterfat and ochre, symbolising beauty, protection and identity. Guests learn about sacred fires and a social structure that has endured in a harsh climate. This is not a staged performance, but a generous sharing: a window into a philosophy of life where every object and ritual carries meaning.

Omarunga Epupa-Falls Camp offers a guided excursion to a nearby Himba village approximately seven kilometres away. Guests may also visit the Himba Living Museum north of Opuwo.

Etosha King Nehale and Ondjumba Cultural Village

On the northern outskirts of Etosha National Park, Etosha King Nehale lodge, named for a legendary Ondonga king, takes guests to the Ondjumba Cultural Village of the Aawambo people.

As Namibia's largest ethnic group, the Aawambo have a rich agro-pastoral heritage, characterised by sophisticated homesteads (omaumbo) and a complex monarchical system. Visitors step into a traditional homestead, witness the crafting of tools, observe the brewing of millet beer (oshikundu), and experience storytelling traditions that sustain communal memory.

Hakusembe River Lodge and The Mbunza Living Museum

On the lush banks of the Okavango River in the Kavango region, Hakusembe River Lodge offers peaceful haven. Nearby, the Mbunza Living Museum celebrates a river-centred way of life.

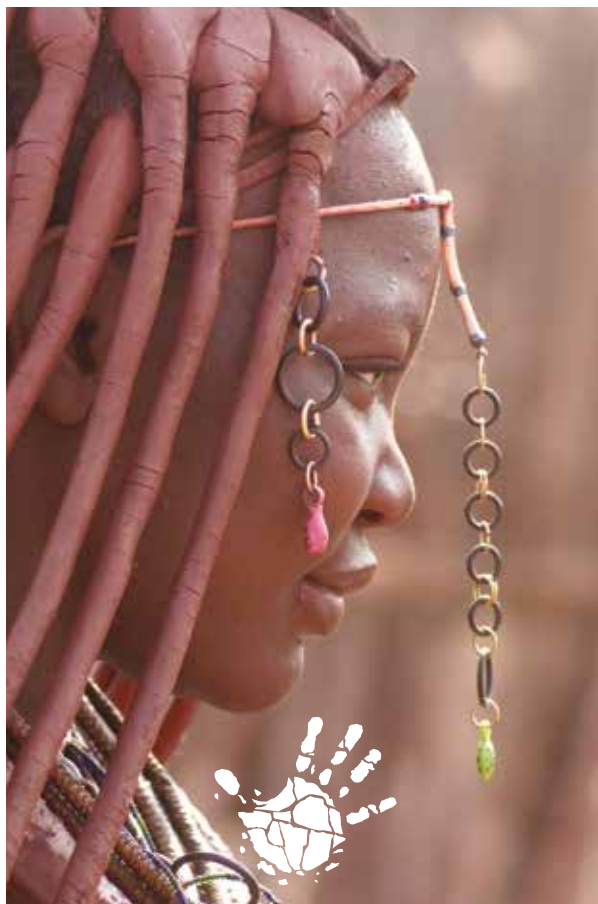
Skilled fishermen demonstrate the crafting of dugout canoes (mokoro), intricate fish traps and traditional drums. Visitors gain insight into fishing customs, river-based agriculture and the spiritual significance of the Okavango, where the flow of water shapes both calendar and cuisine.

The Ripple Effect

Visiting these Living Museums is conscious choice in support of regenerative tourism. Revenue goes directly into communities, supporting education, healthcare, and livelihoods,

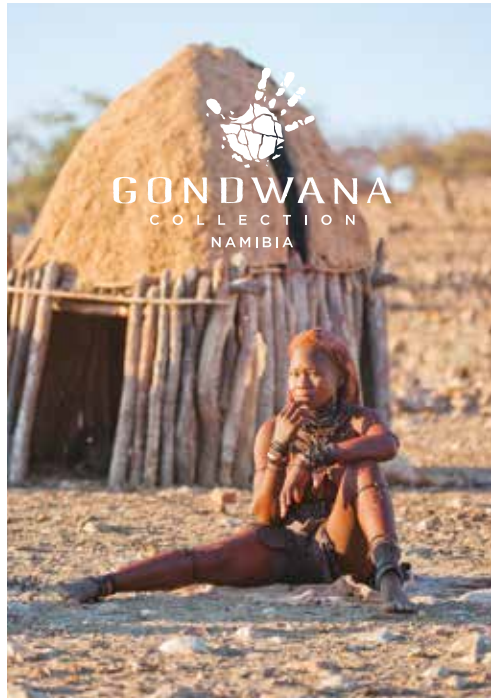
while validating indigenous knowledge and fostering pride among younger generations.

By pairing a stay at a Gondwana Collection lodge with a Living Museum visit, travellers leave not only with memories of landscapes and extraordinary wildlife, but with the stories and handshakes of the people who have shaped this land for millennia.



Let us assist you with your unforgettable holiday in Namibia. Scan the QR code:





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Slice of Life

words by Jescey Bekker



In Sickness, in Health, and in Mismatched Socks



A major issue in our household, and perhaps not in all households, but I'm sure we are not alone — is socks. Keeping them in pairs, looking for them while in a hurry and already late, ending up with mismatched socks and hoping you won't need to take your shoes off before you get back home... has the washing machine eaten the second half of the pair? I'm sure I put both in there?

Then add insult to injury — co-sock ownership. When I am in a rush and looking for longer socks, it's easy: grab a pair of Hubby's. Unfortunately, I am a total hypocrite in this regard because Hubby may not use a pair of mine. Why? Simple, really. A size 6 ladies' sock versus a size 11 men's sock... my poor little secret socks are never the same once Hubby has had his piggies in them.

This is how I found myself one Saturday morning — not a single wearable, matching set of socks in our entire sock drawer. You would think this would be the worst of it, but no. A circle deeper into the chaotic hell of Sockville: having a matching pair... BUT... one sock is perfect, and the other matching sock is so stretched out you could

quite easily drape it over a window and call it a curtain. Infuriating!

And even then, I can top that too... holes in the socks. Not wear-and-tear kind of holes. No — these are “my toes needed space” Hubby-generated holes, cut into the sides of the socks. Glorious.

One would think, go bright, Hubby wouldn't wear a pair of hot-pink ankle-grazing socks, would he? Yes, ladies and gentlemen, he would.

Since learning these lessons, we have explored a new approach to this challenge in our marriage: sparkles. Coupled with polka dots, little hearts and a serious lack of colour (stores apparently have ousted brightly coloured socks). So now Hubby wears his socks, purchased according to his preference, and I wear sparkly socks accompanied by a threat of physical violence if he so much as looks at my socks.

I am not remotely certain this approach will work, but I will be sure to update you on any developments as winter progresses. 🌀



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Dear Diary

words by Sandra Baumeister

Where the Sky Competes with the Dunes



My breathing slowed before my mind caught up. That is how it happens sometimes in a place that truly gets hold of you.

The road into NamibRand Nature Reserve did not feel like an arrival so much as an opening. A quiet sand track. Dunes stretching out with that old, patient confidence only desert landscapes seem to have. I was already a little undone before we even got there.

And then I saw the green.

I was not prepared for it at all. The oldest desert on Earth wearing this soft, improbable blush of sage, as though it had suddenly decided to surprise us. It had rained here — actually rained — and the Namib had answered with the gentlest possible life. I remember leaning closer to the window, almost suspicious, wanting to be sure I was really seeing it.

Then came the oryx.

He stood there completely unbothered by us, as though the dunes belonged entirely to him and we were merely passing through. I loved him for that. Something in me settled.

There is something about encountering a wild animal in a landscape like this that reminds you how small you are, but in a kind way. Not in a humbling or uncomfortable way — more like being put back into the right size of yourself. I always feel grateful for that.

Then we switched vehicles and headed up the dunes.

Literally up. Which felt slightly dramatic and, at times, a little terrifying. I may have held onto the door handle



with more determination than dignity. But then we crested the ridge, and there was Wolwedans, sitting there in the late afternoon light as though it had grown out of the dune itself.

I stepped out and felt the wind first. Then the silence.

The Namib does that strange thing where the wind is somehow full of silence, and the silence itself feels alive. I stood there with my feet in the red sand and did not speak for a while. I did not need to. The landscape had already said everything.

And then the sundowner. Oh, the sundowner.

The sky was on fire. I do not know how else to describe it. The sun and the sand seemed to be in a kind of conversation — or perhaps a competition — with one another: amber, crimson, gold, each colour deepening until I could barely keep up with it. I watched until I stopped feeling like a watcher and started feeling like part of it.

There was something deeply artistic about it, though not in the human sense of art. More in that effortless, almost unfair way nature sometimes arranges itself into perfection without asking anyone's permission. It was beautiful in a way that made me quiet inside. I think that is what Wolwedans does. It makes you quiet in the best possible way.

The soul of the place is not just something they talk about. It is something you feel almost immediately. Positive, honest, creative, fair — those words are not hanging there like a slogan. They are lived. In the way people speak to you. In the way the place is cared for. In the way the land is protected, not as something to use, but as something to honour. I felt that everywhere.

In the warmth of the people. In the details. In the stillness. In the way the whole place seems to breathe with intention. It is rare to feel that a place is not just beautiful, but also deeply right.

And then there is the silence.

Real silence. The kind that asks nothing from you.

The kind that lets your own thoughts come forward without competing with the world. I found myself sitting with it, and surprisingly, I did not want to rush away from it. I felt the absence of Wi-Fi not as a loss, but almost as a relief — as though I had been handed back to myself.

That may sound dramatic, but perhaps the desert makes one honest.

I keep thinking about what this place gave me. Not just beauty — though there was plenty of that. Not just a memory. But a feeling. A reminder that I am allowed to slow down. To look. To listen. To be present without performing the moment for anyone else. That feels important to me.

Because maybe that is part of my modern Out of Africa dream: not just living in this beautiful country, but really living here. Letting it shape me. Letting its space, light, quietness and dignity become part of the way I move through the world.

I will carry Wolwedans with me. Not as something to archive or post or neatly explain. Just as something felt. Something that entered me and stayed.

Red sand still in my shoes,

Sandra 🍷

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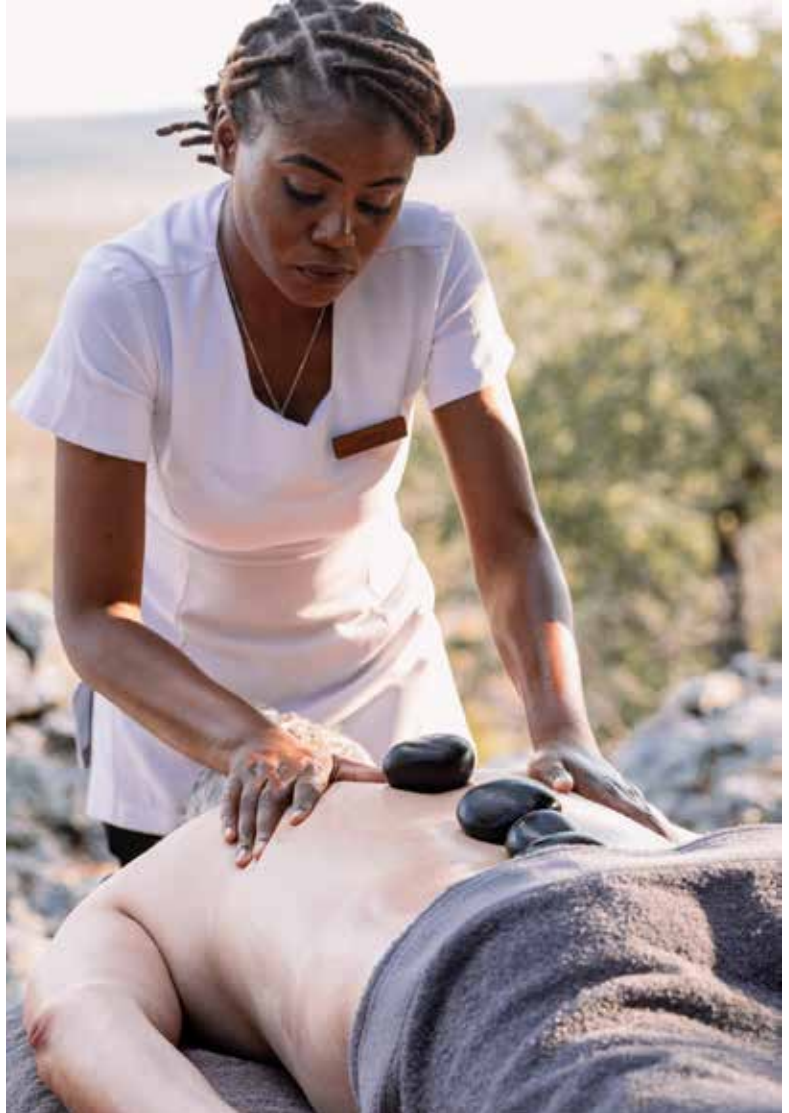
Horizon by Ongava

Perched above a vast private reserve, Horizon by Ongava offers one of Namibia's most intimate safari experiences

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Little Ongava, now exquisitely reinvented and revamped as Horizon by Ongava, is arguably Namibia's most luxurious and exclusive lodge, offering an exceptional experience in one of Namibia's most productive wildlife regions.

Three luxurious villas. That's all, and it's why intimacy and privacy at Horizon by Ongava truly mean what they promise. Each villa stands apart, a private sanctuary shaped by the materials of its surroundings. Stone, wood, glass and thatch come together in a way that feels both grounded and open. Floor-to-ceiling views dissolve the boundary between inside and out.

Each villa comprises an air-conditioned bedroom with en-suite facilities, including a separate toilet, indoor and outdoor showers, a double vanity basin, and a bath with a view. The private sala provides a comfortable seating area with an indoor fireplace, tea- and coffee-making facilities, a hairdryer, mini-bar fridge and electronic safe. Outside, guests will find a private plunge pool and viewing deck from where the reserve unfolds in quiet detail — wildlife moves across the plains as it always has, and always will.

Set within a 30,000-hectare private reserve with high densities of big game, including lion, black and white rhino,

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



and plains game, Horizon by Ongava also offers convenient access into Etosha National Park. Perched on a ridge with uninterrupted 260-degree views, the lodge is now even more focused on privacy, space and highly personalised service.

The unveiling of Horizon by Ongava was formally officiated in April by the Honourable Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Hon. Indileni Daniel, who led the official opening and introduced the lodge's new identity. In attendance were Ongava directors and distinguished guests, reflecting the long-standing partnership between the Government of Namibia and Ongava, and their mutual commitment to conservation, responsible tourism and the stewardship of Namibia's natural resources.

Horizon by Ongava's comprehensive and carefully

considered renovation has seen the main areas redesigned to improve both flow and function. Spaces such as the front deck have been lowered and extended, creating a more generous and accessible environment while opening wider sightlines across the landscape. A new veranda roof provides full shade, while the raised structure strengthens the visual connection to the surrounding wilderness. All decks have been rebuilt on new steel substructures, ensuring durability and stability over time.

Within each villa, the experience has been further refined, with bathrooms redesigned, external decks reshaped, and additional air conditioning installed. Roofs have been re-thatched and sealed, while new flooring has

In Namibia, "lekker" can describe food, weather, music, people, or almost anything enjoyable.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



been introduced across both interior and exterior spaces. Furnishings, fittings and soft finishes have also been upgraded, and lounge areas now include a triple couch that converts into a third bed, offering greater flexibility for families travelling together.

Elevated walkways guide guests through the landscape, linking villas to shared spaces while always preserving a sense of distance and seclusion.

From 2027, each stay will include a complimentary wellness treatment, adding another dimension to the sense of restoration and privacy integral to the Ongava experience.

At Horizon by Ongava, once guests tear themselves away from their villas to explore, they are spoilt for choice. Guided afternoon and evening game drives take place within the

private reserve, and each reservation includes a private vehicle, ensuring an exclusive safari experience. The same applies to the full- or half-day guided morning game drives into Etosha National Park, where every reservation includes a private safari vehicle.

Guided nature walks are also offered seasonally and subject to the availability of a walking guide. For those seeking quiet moments immersed in nature, The Hide at Horizon by Ongava is a fantastic place to while away the hours while wildlife gathers at the waterhole to drink. In this arid environment, where little water naturally occurs, the waterhole becomes a vital and popular gathering place for game.

Space to move, to breathe, to connect - that lies at the very heart of Horizon by Ongava. Space, as far as the eye can see. 🌿

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Inspiration Namibia

*Inspired by Namibia's vastness, colour and raw beauty,
Cheryl Gibb transforms clay into expressive works of art*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs by Cheryl Gibb

Michelangelo

—ART—



Meet Namibian-based ceramicist Cheryl Gibb. At every chance she gets, she heads out into the diverse landscapes of Namibia, for it is here that her inspiration lies.

Cheryl Gibb was born in Pretoria in July 1965 and grew up on a smallholding in Fourways, Johannesburg, surrounded by nature. She says it was here that she had the freedom to explore vast landscapes.

“My parents nurtured in me a deep connection to nature, which became the source of my creativity, shaping everything I create today.”

Cheryl’s creativity found expression at a young age.

“At age nine, I began painting in oils with my next-door neighbour, who held classes in her home studio, and through that I discovered a deep passion for expression and creating

with my hands. I did art both at school and outside of school, and my love for it has taken many forms — from photography and painting to drawing, mosaics, designing and model making. As a qualified interior designer, I have spent years working within interior, graphic and exhibition design environments, each adding a new dimension to my creativity.”

Since 2019, ceramics has been Cheryl’s full-time occupation. She works from an informal home studio called Mantis-Majic-Ceramics. All her ceramic pieces are signed with her initials, encased within the shape of an eye.

Michelangelo asked Cheryl to describe her early interaction with clay

Art classes in primary school. That’s where I was first introduced to clay, shaping simple forms with my hands.



Later, my mother, a passionate hobbyist, set up a pottery studio at home. Then, in 2014, when my husband and I moved to Swakopmund, I took formal pottery lessons for the first time at Keramos Pottery Studio, guided by Sharon Flewellen. That was the moment my deep love for ceramics truly ignited and took root in my creative life. It grounded me in ceramics.

What's your inspiration?

I am constantly drawn to the way nature's shapes, colours and textures interact, as well as animals in their natural environment. My husband and I love touring around Namibia's diverse landscapes whenever we get the chance. Whether we are wandering through the vast Namib Desert, exploring the west coast, or sitting next to a river in the Caprivi, each moment brings a new spark of inspiration into my work.

Working with clay makes me feel grounded and

spiritually connected to everything that surrounds me, as it incorporates the four elements that make up life: earth, water, air and fire. I'm also inspired by the wisdom of mentors and the creative energy of other artists.

How would you describe your current work?

The possibilities with clay are infinite, and I love that I can incorporate all art forms within my one-of-a-kind pieces through shape, painting, carving and decoration using earthenware and stoneware clays, slips, underglazes and fluid glazes. My skills lie mainly in hand-built ceramics using coil, slab and pinching techniques, but I also create functional ware on the potter's wheel.

In my latest work, I am focusing on modern shapes which I hand-build using slabs, painted in primary and secondary colours. My inspiration comes from Cubism

In Australian and broader English slang, "to swipe" means to steal something quickly or casually.

Michelangelo

—ART—



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and the way it breaks down forms, giving me a new way of exploring space. The bright colours infuse energy and emotion into my pieces.

Do you make one-offs or signature pieces you repeat?

With the larger vessels, I tend to create one-of-a-kind pieces, but with the smaller functional ceramics I do make repeated forms. They are never exactly the same in size or shape, however, and are decorated with the same design language, which brings a unique character to every piece I create.

How and where do you sell your work?

To date, I have participated in three group exhibitions through the Potters' Association of Namibia: the Bellhaus

Gallery, the Bowled Over Expo in 2023, where I sold most of my pieces, and the National Ceramics Biennale 2024, where I won first prize in Handwork and sold three pieces. I also sold three pieces at the Shapes of the Current Expo at the Kamma Gallery in Swakopmund.

I sell smaller items at the Namibian Craft Centre in Windhoek, and in the past, I have also sold at markets in Knysna.

Do you run workshops or give talks?

It's not in my nature to give formal talks or run structured workshops, but I do plan to host an informal workshop soon, as I really enjoy sharing my love for clay in a relaxed environment where others can explore pottery together with me. ☺



Thitaka River Lodge

Set along the Kwando River, this new tented camp offers immersive safari living in the heart of Bwabwata National Park.

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



When the clock strikes July, a brand-new luxury tented camp, Thitaka River Lodge, will open in Namibia's remote Bwabwata National Park in the Zambezi Region. Tick off the days...

Deep within Bwabwata National Park along the Kwando River, this glorious new luxury tented camp is set within a remote and untouched landscape. Positioned as "an experience defined by its surroundings", it is certainly the landscape that curates the experience. The lodge offers a slower, more considered way of travelling, one that places equal emphasis on place, people and perspective.

Although remote, the setting is alive with wildlife, including four of the Big Five. Famously, large herds of elephants move along a nearby natural migration corridor connecting vital habitats in Namibia, Botswana and Angola.

Thitaka River Lodge falls under the portfolio of Newmark Hotels & Reserves and is well positioned for travellers combining Namibia with Botswana, Zambia or Victoria Falls itineraries.

The journey to the lodge is as much a part of the experience as the stay itself, and guests have two options: either a scenic drive from Kasane International Airport or a shorter transfer from Katima Mulilo Airport.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



From Kasane, the route winds through Chobe National Park and across the Botswana–Namibia border, a three-hour drive softened by wildlife sightings and open landscapes. Alternatively, guests can opt for a more direct one-hour transfer from Katima Mulilo along smooth tarred roads, followed by a short gravel stretch leading to the beauty of the river’s edge.

Set on elevated decks and tucked away within the forest along the elephant corridor, the lodge’s tented suites are positioned for privacy, uninterrupted views and unforgettable game-viewing opportunities.

Accommodation options include six 51-square-metre Luxury Tents for two guests, three 149-square-metre Luxury Bush Tents accommodating four guests (ideal for

families), three 101-square-metre Private Villa Tents for two, and three 131-square-metre Family Tents for four.

Each tent is designed for supreme comfort, with luxury finishes, privacy and a breathtaking sense of seamless indoor-outdoor flow. Inspired by nature, the design and layout keep the surrounding landscape centre stage.

Guests will relish quiet evenings beneath a canopy of stars, mornings devoted to sunrise coffee and sweeping vistas, outdoor showers under open skies, and afternoon naps cooled by river breezes. Open-air living has a deeply restorative effect, and guests naturally begin to slow down. The result is a stay that feels immersive, elegant and deeply in tune with the rhythm of the destination.

Dining at the lodge follows the same philosophy,

At the peak of his criminal operation, Pablo Escobar reportedly made money so quickly that parts of the banking system struggled to physically count and store it – an estimated US\$60 million per day.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



grounded in seasonality, local sourcing and a strong connection to the land. Guests can accompany the chef through the lodge's herb and vegetable garden, selecting fresh ingredients used in the daily menus. The emphasis is on food that comforts, surprises and brings people together. Warm hospitality is celebrated over formality.

Dining takes place in different settings, allowing guests to experience the many facets of their surroundings, from in-room meals to fireside dinners beneath the stars. There is also a significant focus on shared dining experiences designed to make guests feel at home.


Sustainability is woven into the overall experience, from the lodge's gentle footprint and nature-led design to its support of local sourcing and low-impact hospitality

practices. A defining element is the lodge's relationship with the surrounding community.

Locally made crafts available at the on-site curio shop, including hand-beaded necklaces and artisanal pieces, offer guests the opportunity to engage directly with the creative work of nearby community members.

Beyond the table, Thitaka River Lodge invites guests to explore the landscape from different perspectives. Game drives, river safaris, birdwatching and walking safaris reveal the richness of the region, while the lodge's spa creates space for rest and restoration.

This July, Thitaka River Lodge opens its doors — and its heart — to its very first guests. Will it be you? 🌿



“To appreciate all of this requires a change in how you deal with time and space: You have to stay longer, slow down considerably, and spread out the experience.”



Anthropologists charmed by Namibia's light, emptiness and silence

Portugal-based tourists Robert Pool and Marjolein Gysels have visited Namibia no fewer than four times.

Michelangelo

—MINDSCAPES—



The two medical anthropologists, who have worked in many African countries, have spent their time here on six-week self-drive trips, gaining a unique perspective of the country.

South African-born Robert is also a photographer.

With Europe just a short flight from their home base and countless familiar African countries to revisit, they repeatedly chose Namibia—again and again—as their destination. Michelangelo discovers what keeps drawing them back.

Which areas of Namibia have you visited, and which ones stand out?

On our first trip, we visited the usual tourist destinations – Etosha National Park, Sossusvlei, and the Fish River Canyon, among various other places.

On subsequent trips, we spent most of our time in the places we found unique and breathtaking: the

Tiras Mountains, the NamibRand Nature Reserve and Damaraland.

What stands out in our memories are the light and the colours, especially in the mornings and evenings, of the Tiras mountains and NamibRand, the rock formations and colours, the huge variety of sometimes almost alien landscapes in Damaraland, the vastness and the silence, the darkness of the sky at night, and the stars.

Our recent trip with Conservancy Safaris Namibia (CSN) deserves special mention. Most of the trip covered areas we had already visited and camped at during previous trips, but because we were being guided and driven around for the first time by CSN's Boas Hamba, a local guide and driver, it was as though we were seeing the same areas through a different lens.

Landscapes that had seemed devoid of wildlife were suddenly revealed to be teeming with animals. We saw desert-adapted lions and rhinos for the first time, and



Photos by Robert Pool



many more elephants than previously. We discovered community conservation and learned how it worked. It was fascinating.

As someone who has read a lot about human-wildlife conflict, I was deeply impressed.

What tips would you share with photographers visiting Namibia?

Move away from the main tourist areas, spend time absorbing the wonder of the landscapes, and get the light in the early morning as the sun comes up and at sunset.

I do a lot of black-and-white photography. In addition to the colour and spectacular landscapes that make Namibia great for photographers, it is also great for black-and-white photography because of the starkness and contrast due to the harsh light.

What do you find particularly interesting or unique about Namibia?

We've always found Namibians to be extremely friendly and helpful.

For me, the interesting things about Namibia are more from touristic, anthropological and photographic perspectives. For example, the approach of conservancy-based conservation as we learned from our recent trip, compared to other countries, such as some in Europe, which are struggling with human-wildlife conflict caused by the reintroduction of wolves and bears.

Also unique is the vastness and diversity of the landscapes, compared to the very limited perspective most tourists have when they focus on a few iconic sights only.

Another unique feature is the country's emptiness due to its low population density and the uninhabitable nature

Michelangelo

—MINDSCAPES—



Robert Pool and Marjolein Gysels

of much of the land. This results in unique cultures and diverse ways of life that are far removed from our usual cramped, urban lifestyle based on slaving away all day to enable us to buy yet more commodities we don't need.

To appreciate all of this requires a change in how you deal with time and space: You have to stay longer, slow down considerably, and spread out the experience.

It is a somewhat zen experience, spending relatively long periods being in and looking at relatively empty landscapes.

It forces you to relativise your preconceptions and reflect on what is important.

Have you felt safe at all times during your visits to Namibia?

Generally, yes. We were mostly far from people and towns, so we felt safe from thieves and so on.

Ironically though, the only time we've ever been robbed was in Namibia.

Traffic was sometimes scary, with big trucks on the highway and especially tourists in self-drive vehicles who obviously have no experience on gravel roads.

In which ways can Namibian tourism entities improve?

One thing that springs to mind is the phenomenon of 'rescued' predators.

Many game farms have leopards and cheetahs that 'can no longer fend for themselves'. Tourists can pay to see them being fed. On the few occasions that we saw this, we found it to be a contrived performance – unpleasant for the animals and often involving silly stunts by staff to enable tourists to get spectacular photos. Stop this practice. 🐾

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3. Submit your idea

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<https://kobo-ee.giz.de/x/WeRdvz47>

Once submitted, your entry will be evaluated, and if your idea is selected, you'll be contacted via the email linked to your atingi account. Submission period: 1 June – 31 August 2026



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Thrills Without Frills...

words by Linda de Jager | photographs by Robert Pool





A recent Damaraland encounter left me speechless — a rush of emotions, a silly grin, and a quickened heartbeat, all blooming into the joy I find in the wilderness, sleeping under the Namibian sun and stars. That morning, I watched the day break through my tent window and wondered, not for the first time, about the phrase ‘break of day.’ Yet out here, nothing breaks — hearts, minds, and limbs remain whole — as darkness simply gives way to light.

I woke to the bark of a male baboon echoing off orange cliffs at our nameless campsite, somewhere in Damaraland. The wild night kept me alert — always mindful of animals when stepping out. Trips like these are about leaving your comfort zone and luxury behind: thrills, not frills.

Conservation on Safari

I joined Conservancy Safaris Namibia (CSN) to experience their mobile safaris — true conservation at heart. No luxury, just comfortable basic camps and a bare-bones commitment to preserving and sharing what matters.

The Tracker’s Tale

CSN guide Boas Hamba, born near Palmwag, led us. From a young age, he learned from Namibia’s best in conservation. Starting as a cattle herder, he worked with top conservationists and now brings a remarkable ability to read tracks, a quiet charm, and deep commitment to the land he reveals to visitors, kilometer by kilometer. As Boas says, “I



CSN guide Boas Hamba in Damaraland

started developing my tracking skills in the Sesfontein area when I was very young, looking after livestock. Whenever livestock went missing from the shelter, you had to track it.”

As a child, he dreamed of joining the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) NGO, inspired by its mission to protect Namibia’s landscapes and wildlife. He nearly quit after a close encounter with a massive elephant, but he stayed and became a field officer. He also worked with Dr. Flip Stander on desert lions before leaving to join CSN as a guide and community liaison officer. Working part-time, he spent nearly ten years with Save the Rhino Trust (SRT), passing on his tracking skills to conservancy rhino rangers and deepening his knowledge.

A Journey Through Damaraland

As we drove toward the Huab River’s “Zoo Park,” we talked about our nameless campsite, unlike the many special places with unique names that we visited during my three days on safari. We journeyed through Torra Conservancy — visiting the

Huab River, Krone, Slangkop, Driefontein, De Riet, Dopsteek Hoogte Koppie, and the Springbok River — spending two nights at the Place without a name. On the third day, after covering 170 km of ever-changing landscapes, I left the group at Wêreldsend, the environmental center where community-based conservation was pioneered in the 80s and 90s. The rest of our party was traveling to more exotic locations farther north. Boas says, “We choose routes few travel, taking our guests deep into remote places — and they love it.”

From a Place Without a Name to the World’s End

Boas explained our campsite was chosen to avoid a problem elephant, drawn by tourists who leave food out. The elephant often raids camps for snacks. Now, CSN camps against the cliffs, away from the riverbank.

Lions, rhinos, and elephants draw tourists here. Namibia is the only country where free-roaming lions are increasing outside parks, and there are now more rhinos and elephants than decades ago—proof that community-based conservation works.

The world’s largest passenger aircraft, the Airbus A380, can carry over 850 people in a full-capacity configuration.



I've previously filmed lions, rhinos, and elephants up close, which taught me to stay vigilant in their presence. For me, the risk of being chased, and even a close encounter, felt like a novelty — good for dinner-table stories. But for communities facing poverty and conflict, encounters with wildlife are a daily, often difficult reality.

In Search of Elephants

At one point, we passed Long Dunes — its name matched by its sweeping sands — searching for desert-adapted elephants along the Huab River. My companions, Robert and Marjolein, retired medical anthropologists with years of African travel, brought exceptional wisdom and patience to our adventure. Near Zoo Park, a spot known to tour operators, Boas tracked elephants and we snapped our first photos. But the most thrilling sighting came later, on our way back via Slangpost, at a man-made waterhole.

We encountered a magnificent bull elephant, Siku, who captivated us with his delicate, near balletic movements

before spending over an hour carefully coating himself in black mud. Transformed, he became a striking, almost mythical figure — reminding me why elephants, for centuries, were used as intimidating battlefield “tanks.”

Heading back to the Place without a name, I eagerly anticipated another fire-cooked meal from Boas's sister, Sonia, our skilled campsite cook. Raised in Sesfontein, Sonia learned open-fire cooking from her mother and later honed her craft in Swakopmund. Now, she effortlessly prepares three-course meals — including cheesecake — over the flames. Her cooking only improved with each day of our trip, which also took us to De Riet village, home to a small Riemvasmaker community with communal land, much like the villages of Sonia's childhood.

Guardians and Living Fossils

Boas is committed to involving the local community at every step, ensuring we meet those who help protect this land. We also visited a Conservancy rhino ranger fly camp on



shift at Driefontein, before travelling through a mesmerising Welwitschia garden, where thousands of these ancient, living-fossil plants grow side by side — survivors for millions of years, much like the rhino.

Rhino Tracking

A highlight was searching for free-roaming rhinos on day two. When Boas disappeared for a long time to track one, I found myself eyeing the satellite phone, just in case. Out here, unpredictability is the norm — tracking is best left to experts like Boas, whose skills seem almost instinctive.

Collecting stones and making memories

While waiting for Boas to work his tracking magic, I entertained myself by stone-hopping — leaping from rock to rock, then quietly sitting and getting lost in thought. Some areas held stunning, pitch-black dolerite stones, their surfaces smoothed and split by time, unapologetically broken in two — as if the desert had abandoned its promises. Yet these stones seemed content to stay here, much like us, radiating a mysterious calm that begged to be photographed.

I was especially pleased when Belgian-born Marjolein, instead of growing impatient, casually pulled out a sketchpad

and began drawing the landscape — a scene nearly impossible to capture, thanks to the ever-changing colour palette and shifting diversity of the terrain. I wanted to warn her in advance that her many coloured pencils would eventually fall short, because this world is both subtle and dynamic, a landscape inherently difficult to capture as it transforms from one moment to the next.

Our patience and Boas's relentless tracking paid off. Considering this conservancy spans over 300,200 hectares, finding rhinos without modern tracking technology — relying only on old-school skill and local knowledge — is nothing short of miraculous.

By following their tracks, often over rocks, and knowing the rhinos would feed until the day became hot, he predicted they would head for a familiar outcrop—its partial cave providing welcome shade. We drove ahead and waited for half an hour, when suddenly a black rhino and her calf appeared, trotting toward us across the open landscape. They came so close that, from our rocky outcrop, we could have reached down and touched them. The calf was a perfect miniature of its mother—an image of wild perfection. To avoid a close encounter—and more worried about frightening the rhinos than about us, who were relatively safe, perched up on

Apple sells an estimated 500,000–700,000 iPhones globally every single day during a typical year.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Visiting tourist Marjolein Gysels' sketch of Damaraland

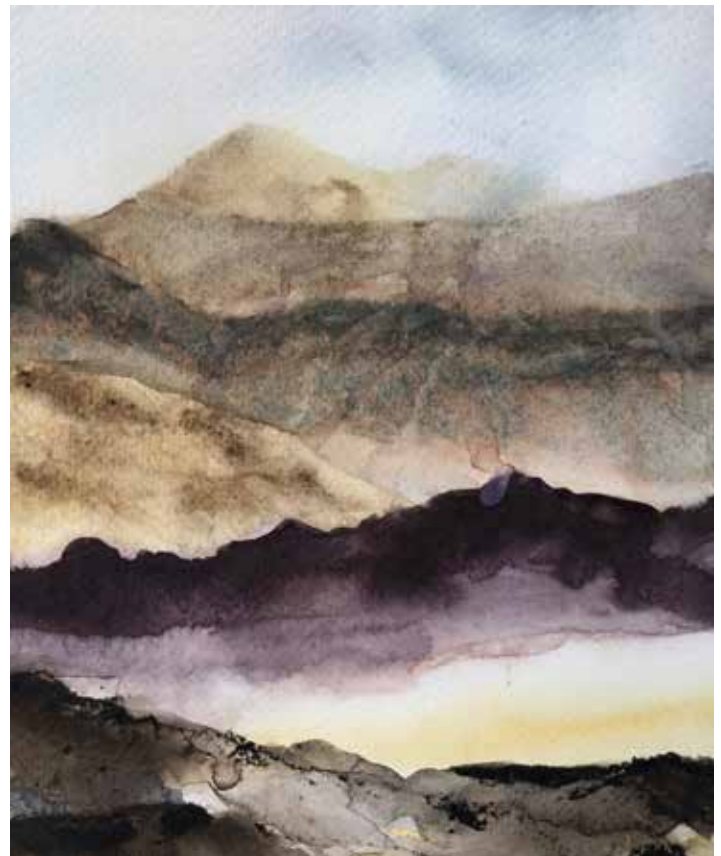
Damaraland 16.1.26

our rocks—Boas tossed a pebble, sending them turning back. They trod away, blissfully unaware of the politics shadowing their fate and of the dark forces of well-connected dealers and an Asian market for their horns, tempting poachers. We watched them disappear into the endless landscape, adrenaline still surging in our veins.

Unbroken light

With Boas bringing us within metres of these wild beings—like finding two needles in a haystack—I was reminded that, despite troubling poaching statistics in national parks, Namibia's light is not yet broken. Moments like this are still possible in communal conservancies: rhinos roam freely in some places thanks to rural communities who are prepared to share their land with dangerous wildlife, and to countless tourism enterprises and conservationists—government staff, NGO workers, and conservancy game guards—who work tirelessly to make such encounters possible for visitors like Robert and Marjolein.

For me, this sighting was a reminder: in moments like these, nothing breaks. To witness an animal in the wild and honour its existence for its intrinsic value is how the world should be—whole, unbroken, and full of light. 🌞





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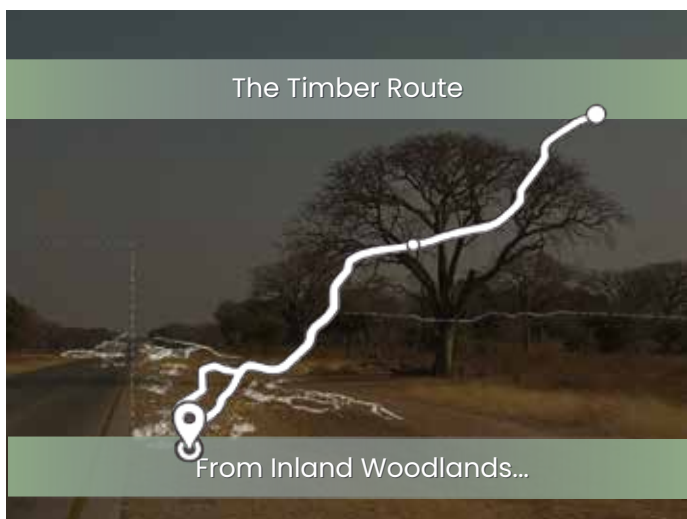
meets water

A 500 km journey from Savanna to River Life

Simanya River Lodge marks the meeting point of land and water, where Namibia's inland journey softens into river calm. Set along the Kavango River, it is both a destination and a threshold, welcoming travellers as the landscape transitions from dry woodland to lush riverside forest.

THE TWO ROUTES

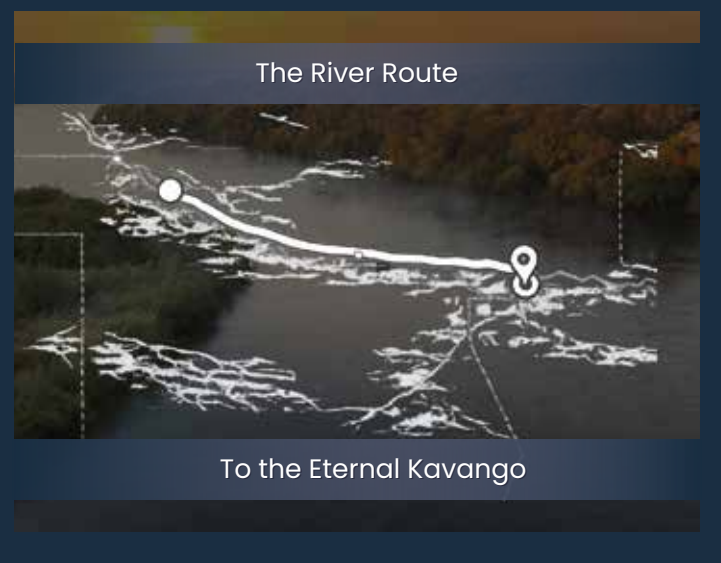
The **Timber Route** traces this transformation from the south. Beginning in the open savannas around Otavi and Tsumeb, it winds through Namibia's most continuous inland timber belt. Manketti trees, hardwood forests, and living traditions shape this quiet corridor, creating a sense of depth, heritage, and gentle progression before the river's green fringe comes into view.



From Simanya, the **River Route** follows the Kavango eastward toward Rundu. Extending more than 130 kilometres, it traces Namibia's only perennial river corridor, a lifeline where water shapes culture and daily life. Mokoro canoes drift past fishing nets, floodplains sustain communities, and riverside villages gather into the soft rhythm of evening.

Travelling these routes reveals Kavango West in its most authentic expression. Arriving at Simanya invites the journey to slow, offering entry into a landscape shaped by water, rhythm, and enduring connection.

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For Women Only

*A thoughtfully curated
Namibian escape designed to
restore, reconnect and inspire
women travellers*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Namibian-based travel group Okutembuka curates a fully guided Namibian retreat and wellness tour for women, and they're flexible. It's an itinerary designed by women, for women, led by women, and it can be tailored to suit your needs.

Women-only tours are becoming increasingly popular for numerous reasons. Solo female travellers — particularly those newly travelling alone — often feel more comfortable within an all-female group, and as people live longer, many widows continue travelling well into their later years. There are countless reasons why a women-focused retreat and wellness tour works — whether you're stepping away from everyday life

to regroup, recovering and seeking a wellness focus, or simply drawn to the idea of connecting with a group of women who often become lifelong friends.

Namibian-based travel group Okutembuka has curated tours for very specific groups for many years. Not only do they know the Namibian landscape extraordinarily well, but they also understand what different groups truly need. They happily tailor-make each journey to suit a particular group, says owner Rolf Tonnemacher.

“So this is one example of how a trip could unfold. We limit the journey to six people, so you could easily travel with a group of female friends. This 15-day journey through Namibia is fully

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



guided and entirely women-focused. It's a retreat and wellness tour led by an experienced female guide, exploring iconic landscapes from the lush Waterberg Plateau to the dramatic dunes of Sossusvlei."

A maximum of six guests is what makes the experience intimate and calm. This adventure blends nature, culture and relaxation within a supportive and empowering setting. Whether you're soaking up the serenity of the desert or bonding with fellow travellers, you'll return home refreshed and inspired.

In a nutshell, this is a journey through Namibia's extraordinary landscapes with a strong focus on relaxation, adventure and wellness. Along the way, guests experience life-changing wildlife encounters, including leopard tracking and a desert elephant safari. Selected spa treatments are included throughout the stay, with additional wellness options available upon request, including yoga retreats.

Here's a taste of the tour:

On Day 1, guests fly into Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek, where they are warmly welcomed by their female tour guide and soon introduced to their fellow travellers. The journey begins with a Windhoek City and Township tour,

immersing guests in the local culture, history and atmosphere of Namibia's capital city. Afterwards, it's time for feet-up relaxation, sundowners and a delicious dinner at Thule Hotel — with sweeping views over the city included. It's the perfect introduction to a Namibian adventure.

From here on, guests spend two nights in each location.

Days 2 and 3 are spent in the scenic Waterberg region at Okonjima Nature Reserve and Okonjima Plains Camp, where guests can expect a peaceful and luxurious stay surrounded by panoramic views of the plains and nearby hills. A guided leopard-tracking excursion offers the chance to follow these elusive animals using both traditional tracking methods and modern technology. Guests also learn about leopard behaviour, their role within the ecosystem, and the important conservation work carried out at Okonjima.

On Days 4 and 5, it's the legendary Etosha National Park. Days are spent game-viewing from waterhole to waterhole as animals gather to drink. This creates fantastic photographic opportunities, from herds of elephants to graceful antelope and the occasional predator. Etosha's vast salt pans and abundant wildlife make it a photographer's paradise.

Days 6 and 7 take the group into Damaraland and a luxury

An estimated 30,000–50,000 tyres are sold or replaced every month in Namibia.



lodge experience. Guests enjoy a guided desert elephant-tracking excursion, following these incredible desert-adapted elephants through Damaraland's rugged and breathtaking landscapes. The experience offers rare insight into the elephants' behaviour, survival strategies and the conservation efforts helping to protect them.

Days 8 to 11 are spent in the coastal town of Swakopmund, where guests enjoy three nights soaking up the unique blend of adventure and relaxation. The Living Desert Tour reveals the secrets of the desert ecosystem, introducing guests to hardy desert-adapted plants and animals while exploring how life survives in one of the harshest environments on Earth. Along the way, guests may encounter some of the desert's quirky inhabitants, including chameleons, snakes and fascinating insect species.

The catamaran tour along the Atlantic coast is sensational. While cruising tranquil waters, guests can enjoy sparkling wine and freshly shucked oysters while taking in the stunning views of the desert meeting the sea. It's a perfect combination of luxury, adventure and coastal charm.

From Days 12 to 14, the journey continues to magical Sossusvlei and a luxurious lodge nestled within the heart

of the region. At dawn, guests set off on a scenic drive to the iconic Sossusvlei dunes, capturing unforgettable photographs as the morning light illuminates the towering sands. Guided excursions reveal the fascinating geology and ecology of this incredible natural wonder.

Back at the lodge, guests enjoy leisurely brunches surrounded by tranquil desert scenery before indulging in rejuvenating spa treatments. Days here blend wellness, relaxation and unforgettable desert experiences in perfect harmony, ensuring guests leave feeling revitalised and refreshed.

Day 15 – the final day of the adventure – begins with an early morning return to Windhoek, allowing time to browse one of the city's local craft markets and perhaps pick up some beautiful souvenirs as reminders of time spent in Namibia. The journey concludes with a relaxed late lunch at Fresh 'n Wild at Utopia, known for its fresh meals and relaxed atmosphere, before guests head to the airport.

NOTE: Particularly during the high season from May to September, Okutembuka Safaris requires at least 12 months' advance notice to tailor-make this tour for a specific group. Some exceptional lodges along the route can also be incorporated into the itinerary. 🌐

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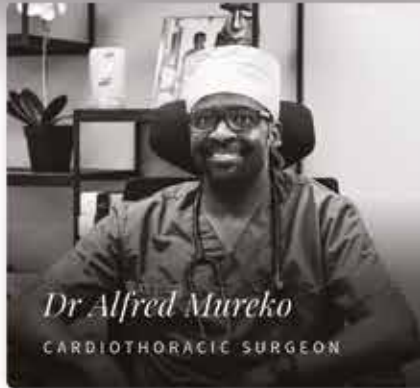
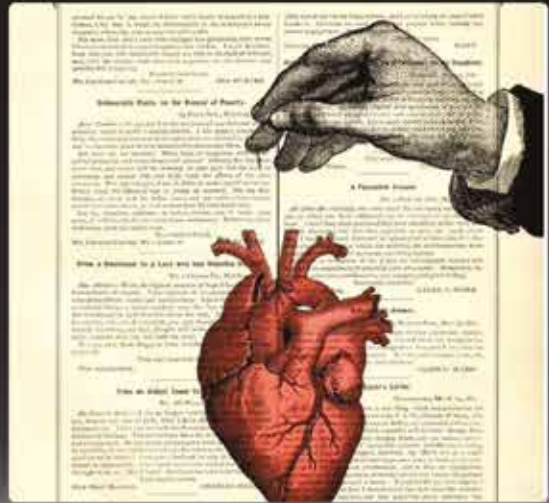
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desert conditions can dehydrate quickly.
- Always use sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses.

ROAD SAFETY

- Drive on the left.
- Gravel roads require slow, careful driving.
- **Avoid driving at night**-wildlife is often active.
- Ensure your vehicle is roadworthy and carry a spare tire and fuel.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- Keep valuables out of sight, especially in urban areas.
- Avoid isolated areas at night.
- Respect local customs and traditions.
- Ask permission before photographing people.

WILDLIFE SAFETY

- Do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Remain inside vehicles in game parks.
- Store food safely when camping and follow park rules.

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- Travel insurance is essential.
- Take malaria precautions when visiting the north.
- **All-round emergency:**
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GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

- **Currency:** Namibian Dollar (NAD) – equal to South African Rand (ZAR).
- **Language:** English is official; local languages and Afrikaans are widely spoken.
- **Help us protect Namibia's beauty** – leave only footprints.

Safety Alert Know your rights

Only use accommodation and shuttle services registered with the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB).

- ✓ All lodges, guesthouses, and transport providers must have valid NTB registration.
- ✓ You have the right to request proof of registration.
- ✓ Look for the official NTB certificate at reception or ask your shuttle driver to show registration.
- ✓ When unsure, check or report with NTB

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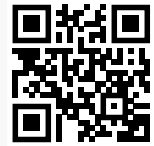
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Herodotus, the Original Travel Influencer

words & illustration by Karel Swanepoel



We live in the information age—an era in which curiosity can be satisfied almost instantly. Yet this drive to document and share experiences is nothing new.

In 1839, Pierre-Gustave-Gaspard Joly de Lotbinière travelled to Greece with a rudimentary daguerreotype camera and captured some of the earliest photographs of Athens and the Acropolis. In 1840–41, Noël Paymal Lerebours published Joly's images in *Excursions Daguerriennes*, widely regarded as the world's first travel photography book. Until then, books had relied on engravings and illustrations. Travel photography had arrived, and it would forever change how we see the world.

Almost a decade later, in 1849, Frenchmen Maxime du Camp and Gustave Flaubert set off for Egypt and the Middle East with more portable equipment. Du Camp took hundreds of photographs while Flaubert kept detailed journals. Upon their return, their work gained widespread acclaim—making them, in a sense, the first travel influencers.

Around the same time, increasing numbers of Europeans ventured into the colonies. These journeys were expensive and largely available only to the wealthy, who could afford large caravans of porters and guides. In the 1850s, the British explorer Richard Francis Burton—prolific adventurer, linguist, and member of the Royal Geographical Society—helped popularise the term

“safari” in English. Derived from the Swahili *kusafari* (to travel), which itself comes from the Arabic *safar*, the word originally simply meant “journey.”

Technology evolved alongside these travellers. Early cameras were cumbersome, but humanity's love of storytelling fuelled rapid innovation. Today, companies like Apple and Samsung rank among the world's largest. We use their devices to phone grandma, check the time, play games in the dentist's waiting room, and yes, to take spectacular photographs with a tiny pocket-sized device.

This brings us to Herodotus. In the 5th century BCE, the Greek historian wrote *The Histories*, a sweeping account of the Greco-Persian Wars and the cultures he encountered. Cicero later called him “the Father of History.” Herodotus travelled widely and recorded what he saw and heard—sometimes accurately, sometimes with a healthy dose of legend mixed in. In many ways, he was the original travel documentarian.

Today, we are all Herodotuses. Recent estimates suggest that YouTube users upload around 500 hours of video every minute—roughly 30,000 hours every hour. Our phones have turned billions of ordinary people into prolific chroniclers of daily life. The physical moments pass, but the digital record remains. We have created a society of historians more productive than any before us. Herodotus would surely be proud. 📱

The Last Word

words by Chris Coetzee



There was a time when mankind believed cocaine was a miracle.

The year was 1860 when German chemist Albert Niemann first isolated cocaine from the coca leaf, transforming an ancient South American plant into a concentrated chemical stimulant that would seduce the modern world.

At first, it seemed almost magnificent.

Cocaine drifted into pharmacies, medicines, tonics, and polite society itself, celebrated as the very embodiment of energy, confidence, intellect, performance, and modern progress. By the late nineteenth century, it had become so socially acceptable that doctors prescribed it even for children, while cocaine-laced toothache drops were marketed for babies. The decades that followed would descend into two world wars and a Cold War. Humanity, as it so often does, mistook stimulation for evolution.

During this time, humanity became so intoxicated with the pursuit of limitless performance that methamphetamine — a drug capable of granting the brief illusion of superhuman capability — became so common among soldiers that it earned the nickname “tank chocolate”, which, in hindsight, should probably have been a warning sign.

Now, for the first time in history, mankind has created something capable not simply of altering feeling, but of altering participation in reality itself. Artificial intelligence.

A machine that no longer merely assists human thought, but increasingly replaces fragments of it: memory, effort, creativity, problem-solving, companionship, judgement, even identity itself. And perhaps that is what troubles me most.

Because stimulants and AI exploit the same ancient vulnerability buried deep within the human condition: the hunger to feel more powerful than we truly are. One chemically. The other psychologically. Only chemical stimulants borrowed the body for a few reckless hours. AI will most likely borrow the mind forever.

Chemical stimulants convinced millions they were greater than human. AI may prove far more dangerous by convincing humanity it no longer needs to be human at all. For they offer the same beautiful illusion.

And perhaps that has always been mankind’s oldest temptation — the desire for power, the fear of inadequacy, and the ancient hunger to escape the unbearable weight of being ordinary.

Because every great Trojan horse in history has arrived bearing gifts perfectly tailored to human weakness.

While a wise man was once explaining to me the extraordinary benefits humanity would enjoy through global satellite reception and technologies such as Starlink, I found myself thinking of something else entirely.

“Plata o plomo.” Silver or lead. The offer one cannot refuse. Even when the cup already overflows, humanity has always struggled to resist the temptation of more.

And perhaps that is the deeper paradox of progress itself: every tool humanity creates to expand its reach also risks widening the distance between mankind and the natural rhythms that once shaped it. The modern world increasingly rewards speed, stimulation, optimisation, visibility and constant participation. Silence becomes uncomfortable. Stillness begins to feel unproductive. Solitude itself starts resembling failure.

Yet wilderness has always demanded the opposite. It asks nothing from us except presence.

Perhaps that is precisely why places such as Khaudum National Park, Bwabwata National Park, and Damaraland remain among our Michelangelo Approved Destinations. Mostly No signal. No cookies. No algorithms.

Because the reality is this: today, you are either the product... or the opportunity. And with every technological advance, true wilderness becomes more valuable, for it remains one of the few places where mankind can still remember what it means to be human. 🌀



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