

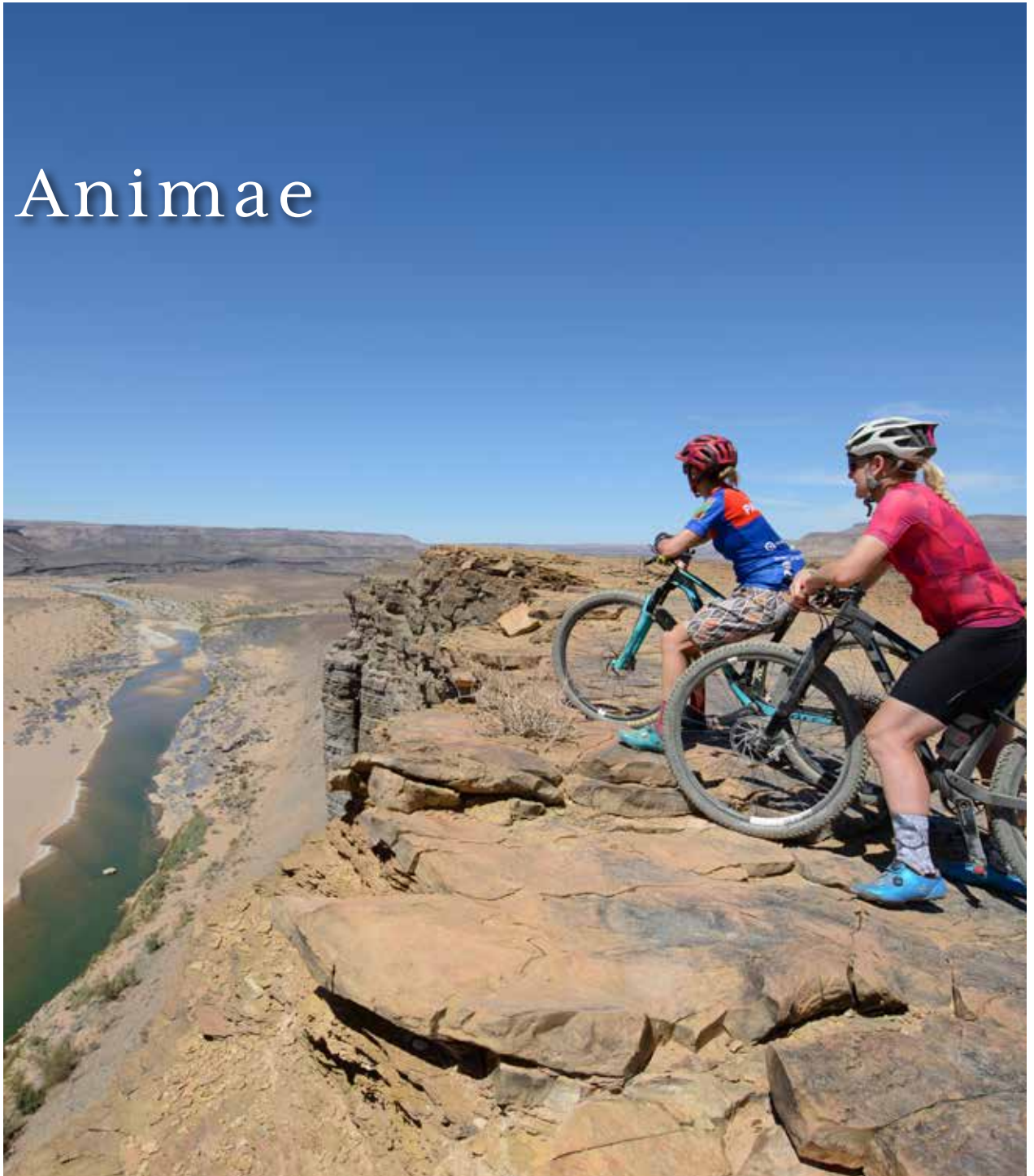
Michelangelo

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IN FLIGHT. IN ROOM. IN AFRICA

FEBRUARY 2026

Via Animae



Born in Namibia,
Read Globally.



ATTENTION

TRAVELERS TO NAMIBIA



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Ministry of Agriculture,
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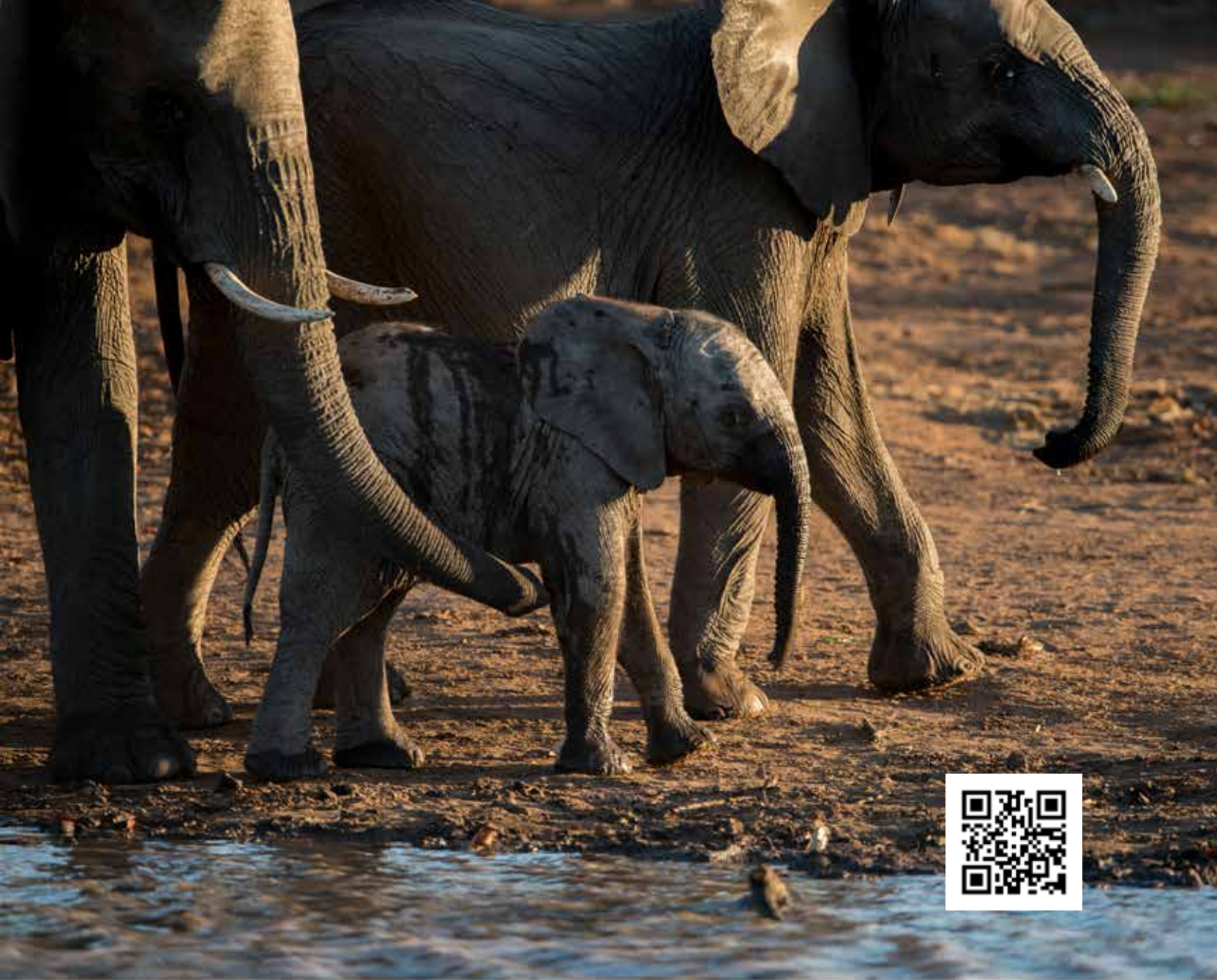
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Honourable

Dr. Sanet L. Steenkamp

Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth,
Sports, Arts and Culture
Republic of Namibia



Dear readers,

As Namibia steps into the opening months of 2026, we do so with a renewed sense of purpose, steady momentum, and confidence in the path we are shaping as a nation. This moment invites reflection beyond the immediacy of daily headlines, an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved since the establishment of the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC), and to reaffirm the priorities guiding our national development journey.

Education remains at the centre of our collective aspirations, a powerful driver of social mobility, economic participation, and national cohesion. The release of the 2025 NSSCO and NSSCAS examination results in January 2026 marked an important moment of affirmation, celebrating the resilience of our learners and the dedication of teachers, parents, and school communities across the country. At the same time, we continue to sharpen our focus on improving learning outcomes, strengthening the foundational levels at Junior Primary Level, as well as strengthening the credibility of assessments, and ensuring that every child, in every region, has access to quality education that prepares them for life beyond the classroom.

One of the most transformative reforms under MEIYSAC is the introduction of a comprehensive subsidised tertiary and vocational education model. From 2026, Government has taken decisive steps to significantly ease the financial burden on families by expanding subsidies across universities, colleges, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. This intervention ensures that capable and deserving young Namibians are not denied further study because of financial limitations. It represents a deliberate investment in human capital, innovation, and national competitiveness and a firm stride towards a knowledge-driven economy.

The TVET sector, in particular, is undergoing a profound transformation. Through full government subsidies, the strengthening of the National Training Fund, the rollout of Work Integrated Learning, and the expansion of vocational training centres across all 14 regions, Namibia is aligning skills development more closely with labour market

demands. These reforms respond directly to one of our most pressing national challenges, youth unemployment, by equipping young people with practical, industry-relevant skills and opening pathways to entrepreneurship, self-employment, and sustainable livelihoods.

In the media and information sphere, Namibia reached a historic milestone with the inscription of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration into UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2025. This recognition stands as a proud national and continental achievement, affirming Namibia's enduring contribution to global press freedom and democratic values. It is a reminder that principles first articulated in Windhoek, of free, independent, and pluralistic media, continue to shape international discourse in an increasingly complex digital era.

Sport remains a powerful force for unity, national pride, and excellence. Over the past year, Namibia has celebrated remarkable international achievements, including a landmark cricket victory over South Africa, medals at the African Youth Games, and podium finishes at the World Para Championships. The successful hosting of the region 5 Youth Games and ICC Men's Under-19 Cricket World Cup further elevated Namibia's standing on the global sporting stage. For the first time, our nation welcomed the world to a Cricket World Cup, a celebration not only of competition, but of youth potential, international friendship, and shared aspiration.

Equally important is the progress being made at home. Events such as the Namibia Annual Sport Awards and the Sport Expo continue to strengthen the sporting ecosystem. At the same time, Government is advancing a coordinated programme of sports infrastructure development focused on upgrading existing facilities and constructing new, fit-for-purpose sports amenities across the country. This includes the completion of the FNB Stadium by Cricket Namibia, advanced preparations to upgrade the Independence Stadium to CAF Category 3 standards, and the rollout of regional and constituency-level sport facilities. These investments are designed to ensure equitable access, nurture talent at grassroots level, and support high-performance sport nationwide.

Arts and culture remain vital expressions of who we are as Namibians and important contributors to the creative

economy. In this context, the Ministry has assumed custodianship of the Namibia Annual Music Awards (NAMAs) to enhance their credibility, sustainability, and developmental impact. By positioning the awards as a national platform under Government stewardship, we seek to promote inclusivity across regions, genres, and generations, inspire emerging creatives, and recognise excellence within the music and entertainment industry. While the inaugural edition is fully supported by Government, future editions will increasingly draw on private sector partnerships to ensure long-term growth and industry ownership.

Across all these sectors, our focus is clear: delivery with impact and sustainability. Challenges such as youth unemployment, skills mismatches, infrastructure backlogs, and the imperative for inclusive growth are being addressed through integrated planning, strengthened governance, and targeted investment. We are enhancing coordination, procurement, and implementation systems so that public resources translate into visible and meaningful benefits for our people.

Since the establishment of MEIYSAC, the message is one of assurance and direction. We are consolidating reforms, accelerating implementation, and aligning our programmes with national development priorities. Our areas of focus, quality education, accessible tertiary and vocational training, youth empowerment, innovation, cultural development, and high-performance sport, are deeply interconnected. Together, they shape a skilled, creative, and competitive Namibia.

To our readers at home and abroad, Namibia remains a stable, welcoming, and forward-looking nation. We value partnerships, tourism, investment, and cultural exchange. Through platforms such as Michelangelo Magazine, we are proud to share our story, one of progress, resilience, and ambition.

As we move through 2026, our commitment is unwavering: to place people at the centre of development, to invest in knowledge and skills, to celebrate excellence, and to build a nation grounded in unity, innovation, and shared prosperity. From Namibia to the world—enjoy this month's Michelangelo Magazine. 🌐



Esther Ndilula

Manager, Namibia Convention Bureau
www.ncb.com.na



Namibia Opens Its Doors to Global Business Events: **A New Era for MICE in Africa**

When I took on the role of Manager at the Namibia Convention Bureau, I knew we were stepping into an exciting moment for our country. Today, I am proud to share that Namibia has officially positioned itself to become Africa's premier hub for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE).

Officially established by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) in collaboration with the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), the Bureau I now lead represents more than just another destination marketing initiative. It marks a fundamental shift in how our Southern African nation positions itself on the global business events stage.

Why Namibia, Why Now?

I am often asked why event organisers should consider Namibia, and my answer is always the same: the timing could not be more strategic. As I engage with event organisers worldwide, I see them seeking destinations that offer unique experiences, political stability, and world-class infrastructure. Namibia delivers



on all three. We combine breathtaking natural landscapes with modern facilities, making our country ideal for delegates who value both productive business environments and memorable experiences.

We established the Bureau with clear economic objectives that I am passionate about achieving: to diversify Namibia's tourism economy, unlock high-value MICE sector opportunities, and create sustainable employment across multiple industries. What excites me most is that business events travellers typically spend more, stay longer, and often return as investors, creating economic ripple effects that extend far beyond the conference hall into hospitality, transport, creative industries, and professional services.

Real Results, Real Impact

I want to be clear: we are not starting from scratch. In 2025 alone, I had the privilege of supporting 20 major MICE events spanning the energy, technology, mining, and creative industries. These included high-profile gatherings such as the Commonwealth Business Summit 2025, Global African Hydrogen Summit 2025, AFI Global Policy Forum 2025, and the Africa Infrastructure Finance, Investment & Partnership Summit 2025.

Over the past 24 months, I have watched Namibia welcome 36 international conferences, including the African Union MSME Summit, AviaDev, and the Africa Hospitality Investment Forum. These events have injected millions of dollars into our local economy and demonstrated our growing capability as a MICE destination.

Streamlined Access for International Delegates

One of the advantages I am most excited to share with international event organisers is our innovative MICE visa programme. Since the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security (MHAISS) launched the MICE visa in 2024, I have seen over a thousand applications processed through our fully digitised e-visa portal. This removes one of the traditional barriers that often complicate African event planning, ensuring smooth entry for international delegates.

An Invitation to Event Organisers

As Manager of the Namibia Convention Bureau, I now serve as your official point of contact for planning business events in our country. Whether you are organising an international conference, planning an incentive programme, coordinating a trade exhibition, or hosting a corporate meeting, my team and I offer comprehensive support, including bidding coordination for international conferences, event logistics support, destination marketing, and access to registered service providers across the MICE value chain in Namibia.

I have worked hard to establish partnerships with registered service providers and maintain an active network across the MICE ecosystem, from venue owners and hotels to caterers, event production companies, transport operators, and creative service providers.

Looking Ahead

I have developed the Bureau's strategic action plan with a focus on profiling Namibia globally through international MICE trade shows, securing membership in prestigious organisations such as the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), and conducting educational workshops for stakeholders. My goal is clear: to strengthen Namibia's competitiveness in attracting regional and global business events while advocating for industry-related policy improvements.

For event organisers seeking a destination that combines African authenticity with world-class facilities, political stability with natural wonder, and professional service delivery with genuine hospitality, I believe Namibia presents a compelling proposition.

I invite you to discover what makes our destination unique. Whether you are planning your next conference, incentive trip, or industry exhibition, I encourage you to explore the possibilities at www.ncb.com.na.

The world of business events is evolving, and I am ready to write the next chapter alongside you. 📍

Michelangelo

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FEBRUARY 2026

Via Animae



ON THE COVER:

Beyond the View: An Active Way to Travel

Why Namibia Is Best Discovered on Foot, by Bike, and Beyond the Vehicle Window.

(See pages 58-62 for the full story)

www.journeysnamibia.com



Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of Michelangelo International Wine and Spirits Awards.

African Excellence Awards

2025

Best Luxury Tourism Magazine 2025 – Southern Africa & Client Satisfaction Excellence Award 2025



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ISSN: 2026-8998

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Michelangelo Magazine

Shop #2 Ferreira's Garden
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Namibia

Printer

Solitaire Press (Pty) Limited
Windhoek, NAMIBIA

"Good Level Contributor"

according to the NPPC BEE
scorecard
ISO 9001:2015 Certified company

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On Horseback in Namibia

*A Journey of Endurance, Connection
and Wild Landscapes*

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs from the Namibia Horse Safari Company





For decades now, Andrew Gillies, owner and lead guide of Namibia Horse Safari Company, has led two magical horse safaris: a week-long (10-day) Exploratory and a remarkable month-long safari combining three safaris in one. They also offer other scheduled departures, and over 50 percent of participants are repeat guests from around the globe.

Helen Kay has been with the Namibia Horse Safari Company for over 20 years, and her passion for their horse safaris has not wavered a fraction. Namibia Horse Safari Company runs 10–13 safaris a year, one of which is the Exploratory, and another the Epic, which is run only every three to four years. The constant quest for new experiences is part of the journey.

The so-called scheduled rides include the Damara Elephant Safari, Skeleton Coast Safari, Wild Horses Safari, and Namib

Desert Safari, but Andrew does not publish fixed itineraries. Every single year, they find somewhere new to ride.

Helen sees many guests returning time and time again from all over the world to relive the journey: “It’s intoxicating out there,” she enthuses — an experience that is as intensely personal as it is about connections, horses, landscapes and camaraderie. There are those who ride safari after safari, or, in one case, have completed 19.

The Exploratory is a ten-day trip, camping outdoors, rarely with a tent — eight of the days are spent camping ‘out’, with two nights on either side accommodated. The Epic comprises three safaris joined together, with a two-day R&R breather for participants and horses in between. Horse care is paramount.

They do not offer short or day rides. It is all about expedition-type riding, with a constant element of surprise: “We’re always doing something new. We do the Epic every



few years because there's a demand for it. When we're on the Exploratory, we are constantly looking for new angles and landscapes that will work for us — we need a water source, access for a back-up vehicle, and a substrate that's good for the horses' feet. The riders go cross-country, and the back-up vehicle by road. We are always highly conscious of our impact on the environment, so you'll see that reflected in where we move and where we camp — no more impact than wildlife has on the landscape."

Namibia Horse Safari Company trips have traditionally taken place in the cooler months, but expansion into the Skeleton Coast has extended the season. The cool mist and fog there are not only exquisite, but transformative: "The Skeleton Coast has proven to be magical," says Helen. "Almost contrary to expectation, the landscapes and colours change

all the time. 'Otherworldly' really applies here. It looks as if some of those photographs are taken from the moon or Mars — landscapes that make you do a double take because they're so startling. They pull you back into yourself."

Pulling back into yourself is a significant part of these safaris. It is about surrendering yourself, and that is precisely what happens. No decisions to take, no stresses to dwell on, just immerse yourself in the landscape and enjoy the connection with your horse. Some choose to sleep close to their horse, while others head off a little further afield for a solitary night experience. For the month-long Epic rides, it is obligatory that participants have ridden with Namibia Horse Safari Company before: "We need to know it's the right kind of person for this trip, both for their sake and for that of others."

In addition, there are no beginners on any trip. These

The average person today consumes twice as much
as someone did in 1960.



safaris are for experienced riders because, as Helen explains, their horses are “not dude ranch horses by any stretch of the imagination. They are seriously forward-going, and you need to know how to ride that.”

“Spending 24/7 with a horse is a horse lover’s dream,” Helen explains to a non-rider. “You can’t do this trip anywhere else. There are other horse safaris worldwide, but you are always distanced from your horse on a lodge-based safari, or where you have enclosed tents. We have tents, but we seldom erect them. We have the most magical night skies because there is no light pollution in these areas—you lie on your bed and look at this utter magnificence. You can see the way the sky moves at night.”

Experience is one thing; fitness is another. You need to be able to be outside 24/7, and that can be hard, but it detaches

you from yourself. It is all about being there and being with the horse. Quite intoxicating. People want to ride more and more, and then they want to ride somewhere else.

Andrew Gillies is extremely experienced, has been a guide his entire life, knows exactly what to do in wildlife situations, and enjoys interacting with both men and women. He rides every single safari, with participants coming from destinations including America, Australia, Britain and Germany: “We have the reputation of offering the most challenging riding safari in the world. That is certainly a drawcard, but it’s just one element.”

Their safaris book up very quickly, so if you are looking to escape your world, recalibrate your life, and experience some of the finest scenery on the planet, don’t delay. It is life-altering in many ways.🐾

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LEISURE

NAMIBIA THROUGH OUR EYES

Scan to read later!



NAMIBIAN HOSPITALITY.
WHERE STRANGERS

BECOME FAMILY

From the first smile at arrival to the fond farewell, Namibia's warmth transforms every journey into something extraordinary.

There's a moment that every traveller to Namibia experiences—that first genuine smile, offered without expectation. It might come from a lodge receptionist, a local vendor or someone you pass on a dusty street. It's a smile that says: you belong here. This is the essence of Namibian hospitality, where the boundaries between host and guest dissolve into something far more meaningful.

"No one bothered us and people were super nice and friendly," reflects one visitor. "Very few of the hassles you get in some places as a tourist." Another puts it more directly: "Namibians are too nice it's scary." Yet this warmth isn't performance—it's genuinely woven into the cultural fabric of this vast, stunning country.





A JOURNEY BUILT ON CONNECTION

The Namibian welcome begins long before arrival. It's in the careful planning, the thoughtful recommendations, the anticipation of what will make your journey unforgettable. At the coastal Strand Hotel Swakopmund, the summer ambience creates the perfect leisure start. Through Midgard's green-season farm walks and Le Mirage's dramatic desert sunsets, each experience is handpicked to reveal Namibia's many faces. From Divava's lush riverscape to Mokuti's intimate Etosha sightings, every property tells a different chapter of the same love story.

"This is where O&L Leisure's vision—"Namibia Through Our Eyes"—becomes tangible. Each property in our collection serves as gateways to authentic cultural encounters, places where world-class luxury meets the untamed beauty that makes Namibia extraordinary." Maryke van Lill, Marketing General Manager – O&L Leisure.

THE HEART OF WELCOME

Before we speak, we offer water. Before we ask why you've come, we show you where to sit. Before the conversation begins, we make space for you. This is the heart of Namibian hospitality—a philosophy that transforms strangers into friends before the luggage is unpacked.

From the San people of the Kalahari to the Himba communities of the northwest, from the descendants of European settlers to Namibia's diverse urban population, each group contributes its own traditions to this culture of welcome. The result is a richness that mirrors the country itself: vast, varied and profoundly authentic.



What sets Namibian hospitality apart is its refusal to choose between comfort and authenticity. At O&L Leisure properties, you'll find both: the refined service of international standards paired with the genuine warmth that can't be manufactured. Employees don't just serve. They share—stories of the land, knowledge of wildlife, insights into local culture. They're passionate ambassadors of a country they love deeply.

"Namibians are genuine and direct," notes one traveller. "Meeting everyday Namibians on the street is a breath of fresh air." This authenticity extends throughout the O&L Leisure experience. From dawn safaris in Etosha to star-lit gourmet dinners, from cultural exchanges with indigenous communities to quiet moments watching the sun set, every experience is designed to be transformative.



A PROMISE OF BELONGING

The magic of Namibian hospitality lies in its ability to make you feel valued, as a person. It's in the small talk about your travels, the genuine interest in your stories, the extra effort to ensure your comfort. It's why visitors consistently describe Namibians as "the nicest people I have encountered" because here, hospitality isn't a professional courtesy. It's who we are.

"At O&L Leisure, this philosophy manifests as "gentle luxury"—a commitment to exceptional experiences that honour guest and place. Our dedication to responsible tourism ensures that your journey benefits Namibia's cultural and natural heritage, creating meaningful connections that extend beyond your visit," enthuses Maryke.

"When you arrive at any of our Leisure properties, you visit a destination and step into a space where you're welcomed like family, where the country's beauty is matched only by the warmth of its people. From your first greeting to your final farewell, you'll experience hospitality that transforms travel into something deeper, namely a sense of belonging in one of the world's most beautiful countries.

This is Namibia through our eyes—where every journey begins with a smile and ends with a friend."

**Maryke van Lill - Marketing
General Manager: O&L Leisure**



Discover our
handpicked
destinations.



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LEISURE

NAMIBIA THROUGH OUR EYES



TWO DESTINATIONS ONE EXTRAORDINARY FEBRUARY

This month, let love guide you to Namibia's most captivating escapes. At Midgard Otjihavera Windhoek, reconnect beneath hilltop sunsets with spa rituals designed for two or saddle up for adventures that bring you closer. Along the coast, Strand Hotel Swakopmund invites you to unwind where desert meets ocean, with therapeutic treatments and intimate dining experiences that celebrate togetherness.

BOOK NOW





Namibia's Lighthouses

- Beacons for
the World

*Silent Guardians Along
the Atlantic Coast*

words and photographs by Olga Nesterenko



Namibia was recently named Africa's top destination for authentic travel. It is a real lighthouse for travellers, guiding them towards authenticity.

While half the world crowds monuments, here you find space as the “new luxury” - vast horizons and landscapes that feel timeless. For me, it is the country where I found my own light. Namibia is not only about deserts and wildlife. Along its Atlantic coast stand silent guardians: lighthouses, symbols of resilience and hope.

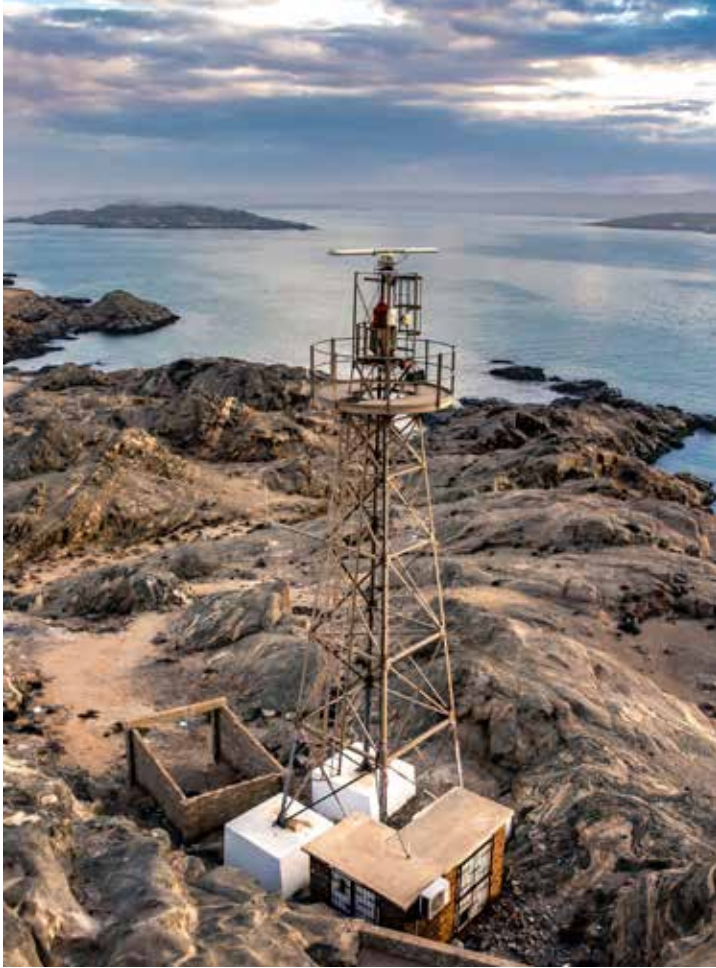
I remember the elegant Yalta Lighthouse on the jetty, a symbol of Crimean summer holidays on the Black Sea, and the striped Berdyansk Lighthouse on the Azov Sea. Ukrainian lighthouses feel more ‘architectural’ and deeply woven into the cultural landscape, whereas Namibian lighthouses represent a one-on-one struggle with the elements. They are the perfect metaphor for the Namibian experience: tough, standing in the middle of nowhere, yet making you feel that everything is under control.

I stay in the charming coastal town of Swakopmund, and its lighthouse is deeply personal to me. It whispers, “You are

home.” It has stood since 1902 and once marked the entrance to the harbour, watching the town grow from a tiny outpost into a coastal hub.

The Namibian coast is notorious for dense fog, strong currents and hidden rocks. Before the lighthouse, many ships were wrecked near Swakopmund. Just a short stroll away lies the museum, where displays of shipwreck relics echo the lighthouse's role in saving countless sailors. Walking closer, you notice how the lighthouse tells its own story: the lower part of unpainted brick marks the original structure, while the upper section, added in 1910, gleams with its bold stripes. The very first ‘tower’ on the pier, simply a beacon 6.5 m high with a light on top, was washed away within months.

Surrounded by palm trees and cafés, it is perhaps the least “lonely” lighthouse in the world. Start your morning here: grab a coffee, sit on the grass, listen to the Atlantic's roar and watch the world go by. It once guided ships to a port that no longer exists, but unlike many historic lighthouses, Swakopmund's remains operational. At night, its beam reminds us that light endures even in misty times. Locals say



it “protects the memory”, reminding us that while the land itself changes, the light remains constant.

In contrast to Swakopmund, Walvis Bay has a harbour but no lighthouse. Driving south along the shifting sand spit (you need a 4x4), past pink salt pans and flocks of flamingos, dodging thousands of seals who clearly think they own the place, you reach Pelican Point. Built in 1915, the lighthouse tower stands surprisingly far inland as the spit grows longer each year, showing that while the land itself changes, the light remains constant.

When I first visited, I was struck by the silence, broken only by the cries of animals. It is often misty here, and you feel as if you are at the end of the world. Yet a boutique lodge offers breathtaking panoramic views.

You can also book a kayaking tour and experience the space between a silent, towering lighthouse and a colony of

thousands of seals. Locals whisper that the ghost of an old lightkeeper wanders around, just to make sure the seals are not interfering with the equipment.

The Lüderitz (Shark Island) Lighthouse was built in 1903 and guided ships during the diamond boom. For me, it is a monument to endurance, as the Shark Peninsula is a place of both beauty and haunting history. Monuments here remind visitors of this painful past, standing not far from the lighthouse itself.

This lighthouse is more of a sturdy building perched on the rocks than a tall tower. It was decommissioned in 1910 and no longer shines, but its presence remains powerful. Nearby is a high steel structure that now serves as the lighthouse.

Located at the highest point of the island, it is easily accessible by car. The original tower was part of a holiday



resort, and I was lucky enough to experience this exclusivity for a few days. From the top, you see the powerful ocean, an impressive port and the cozy town.

Driving out of Lüderitz, the road winds past barren hills and salt pans until the Atlantic suddenly appears. At the end of this dramatic peninsula lies Diaz Point Lighthouse, a striking tower built in 1915. There is an old fog bell here that once rang to warn ships. People say that on stormy nights, you can still hear the bell, even though the mechanism is long gone. It is haunting and cool at the same time.

There are camping options near the lighthouse, offering a truly unique coastal experience and one of the few places where you can fall asleep to the sound of the Atlantic crashing against the rocks outside your tent. The cries of cormorants, gulls and terns mix with the surf, creating a wild chorus. You share the coastline with seals basking on

nearby beaches and African penguins that waddle along the rocks or dive into the waves.

Many travellers describe it as a place where you feel both very small and very alive, surrounded by the raw power of nature. Even the wind here can be brutal. Bring warm clothes, as Atlantic weather, like life itself, is unpredictable but always spectacular.

Namibia's lighthouses may be few, but they are steeped in history and set in picturesque landscapes, symbolising a land of bravery and freedom which, for me - coming from the land of the Cossacks, free people—are not just words, but a way of life. Beyond that, I have realised that we all need markers to feel safe in a vast world. But sometimes, even the brightest beam is not enough. If you cannot find light in your surroundings, look for it within yourself. Be that lighthouse — for yourself and for those around you. 📍



A DEEPER
TRACK
THROUGH
NAMIBIA

GONDWANA
COLLECTION
NAMIBIA



In Namibia, travel is an act of connection. This is not a land for passive observation, but a place where quiet promises are made between visitor and landscape. Here, each grain of sand tells a story of vanished rivers, and species that have learned to survive in seemingly impossible places.

Through the pioneering vision of Gondwana Collection Namibia, travel has transformed into an act of co-creation, where your presence directly fuels some of the most ambitious conservation stories on the continent.

Desert elephant tracking in Damaraland

Venture into the remote northwest and you enter the realm of the desert-adapted elephant. These giants shaped by scarcity and heat, have become one of the planet's most resilient creatures. These free-roaming elephants have evolved to survive in extreme aridity, travelling vast distances along parched riverbeds.

Gondwana Collection's full-day Damaraland Elephant Explorer, hosted by Damara Mopane Lodge, is a masterclass in survival. Led by expert local guides, guests track desert elephant, learning how these giants survive in one of Namibia's harshest environments.

Guests follow ephemeral river systems that serve as lifelines for these elephants, tracing prints across copper-coloured sands to find animals that can smell underground water and dig it free with astonishing precision.

Each sighting is a success story. Through responsible tourism and community partnerships, the species' populations in the Kunene Region have stabilised, with travellers directly supporting monitoring efforts, anti-poaching patrols, and sustainable livelihoods.

Black Rhino Sanctuary in the Fish River Canyon
In Southern Namibia, the country's most ambitious conservation story is unfolding: the black rhino is returning to a territory it last roamed freely more than 150 years ago. Through a pioneering partnership between Gondwana Collection, Elephant Rhino People

(ERP) Conservation Foundation Namibia, and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, the world's largest privately owned Black Rhino Sanctuary is in the works.

This initiative is rooted in three decades of ecological restoration within the Gondwana Canyon Park in the iconic Fish River Canyon, the second largest canyon in the world. The sanctuary combines cutting-edge anti-poaching systems, dedicated ranger units, and tourism-led conservation.

Activities such as immersive rhino tracking and educational safaris will generate sustainable employment while securing the long-term protection for one of Africa's most endangered mammals.

Bushman Wisdom of the Kalahari Desert

To the east of Namibia, an equally profound encounter awaits. The Bushman Wisdom Experience, offered by Gondwana Collection's Kalahari Anib Lodge leads travellers into the Kalahari Desert and into the ancient world of Namibia's first inhabitants.

During the walk, guests learn ancestral way to read the land: identifying medicinal and practical plants, uncovering ancestral survival skills, and interpreting tracks etched into the red sand. Through intimate storytelling and demonstrations, the Bushmen share their deep bond with the desert, offering guests glimpse into a culture that has thrived for tens of thousands of years - an experience that lingers long after the footprints disappear.

A New Way of Travelling: Travel with Purpose

In Namibia, each journey becomes an act of preservation, of wildlife, of ancient knowledge, and of landscapes older than memory.

For Gondwana Collection Namibia, conservation is a founding principle. Whether tracking elephants through desert valleys, learning San wisdom, or witnessing the return of the black rhino, travellers become part of something far greater: a legacy initiative.



To view the majestic desert Elephants or learn more from the Bushman, scan the QR code to book a stay



SCAN THE
QR CODE



HELLO NEIGHBOUR,

come and stay for two nights and
enjoy the unforgettable
Damara Elephant Explorer
day tour.



GONDWANA
COLLECTION
NAMIBIA

Slice of Life

by Jescey Bekker



Rainy Season and Noisy Consequences

Anyone travelling through the Namibian countryside this February will see lush greenery stretching around the capital and across certain Namibian landscapes. A further treat would be an afternoon rain shower, with soft, rumbling thunder and gentle sunlight gleaming through the rain clouds. There are very few experiences that can come close to the majesty of Namibia during our rainy season.

Namibian people are a community that thrives in rainy weather – considering that it is such a scarce experience in a desert country. We closely monitor rain measurements and can spend hours discussing and comparing El Niño and La Niña. However, for all our love and enjoyment of rain, drizzles, and summer showers, there is one side effect that drives us all up the wall: mosquitoes. Those horrible, floating, buzzing, annoying little critters.

Outside of the Zambezi Region, Namibia is a fairly low- to no-malaria-risk area, so fortunately we don't

need to worry about that nasty repercussion. What we do have to deal with are dozens of little red, itchy blotches across ankles, toes and fingers because you forgot to spray Peaceful Sleep on your hands and feet.

Any slight movement of a pot plant or curtain sends wafts of irritating buzzing into the surrounding air.

At this point, I have tried every kind of mosquito repellent I can find on the market – chemically based, essential oil-based, and a few surprising options in between. Regardless of potency, there are always a few sneaky buggers that find an unprotected spot. Or worse yet, the ominous buzzing right above your head in the middle of the night.

Regardless, the annoyance does not detract from the joy of the sweet petrichor and the sound of raindrops on a corrugated iron roof. Wherever you may find yourself this February, enjoy the splendour of a lush, green, rainy Namibia. 🦟



Rudolf Seibeb:

The Politics of the Ordinary

*Painting Community,
Memory and Quiet
Resistance*

words and photographs by Laschandre Coetzee

In a contemporary art world often driven by spectacle, scale and urgency, the work of Rudolf Seibeb moves in the opposite direction. Quiet, resolute and deeply human, his paintings insist on the value of the everyday — of people, gestures and moments that are rarely centred in dominant narratives.

The publication *Rudolf Seibeb: Portraits of the Common*, released by the ARAK Collection, offers a timely and considered engagement with an artist whose practice reminds us that the ordinary is neither neutral nor insignificant, but profoundly political.

Born in 1964 and based in Okahandja, Rudolf Seibeb is a self-taught Namibian artist whose career has unfolded largely outside formal academic institutions. His path into the arts was shaped by lived experience and later anchored through his engagement with the John Muafangejo Art Centre in the 1990s, a formative space for many Namibian artists working beyond conventional frameworks. From this grounding, Seibeb developed a visual language that is immediately recognisable: flattened figures, heavy black outlines, mask-like faces and compressed pictorial spaces that feel both intimate and unsettling.

Rather than depicting named individuals or heroic subjects, Seibeb repeatedly returns to anonymous figures — men, women and children rendered without markers of status or power. These are not portraits in the traditional Western sense, nor are they aspirational images. As art critic Ashraf Jamal observes in his contribution to the book, Seibeb's figures resist ego, authority and self-celebration. Their faces are deliberately generic, enabling a form of mutual recognition in which viewers are invited to see themselves, or others, reflected back. In this sense, Seibeb's work operates less as representation and more as encounter.

The notion of 'commonness' in Seibeb's practice is not a retreat from complexity, but a strategy. By stripping his figures of individuality, he foregrounds shared emotional and psychological states. Faces appear within faces, bodies contain other bodies, suggesting multiplicity rather than singular identity. Jamal reads these repetitions as inquiries into collective subjectivity — the many selves that coexist within a person, a community or a nation. What initially appears

simple or naïve unfolds, on closer inspection, into layered meditations on belonging, vulnerability and resilience.

The book's foreword, written by ARAK Collection founder Abdul Rahman Saleh AlKhelaif, provides a more personal entry point into Seibeb's world. AlKhelaif recounts his first encounter with the artist's work in 2020 and the gradual deepening of their collaboration, culminating in a visit to Seibeb's studio, Tadami Khu Arts, in Okahandja. The studio's name, drawn from the Damara language and meaning 'Do not talk bad about your people', offers a key to understanding Seibeb's ethical position as an artist. His paintings do not romanticise hardship, nor do they caricature it. Instead, they observe, record and hold space for lived realities with dignity and care.

Additional essays by Marcos Jinguba, Jamil Osmar (Parasol), Elize van Huyssteen and Frieda Lühl situate Seibeb's work within broader conversations around Namibian art histories, self-taught practices and the politics of representation. Collectively, these texts challenge the tendency to frame artists like Seibeb through the limiting lens of innocence or purity. Rather than being outside discourse, *Portraits of the Common* positions Seibeb as actively shaping one — using stylisation, repetition and restraint as deliberate artistic choices.

Working primarily in acrylic on canvas and occasionally incorporating found objects, Seibeb's material practice mirrors his conceptual concerns. His surfaces are flat and graphic, yet emotionally dense. His figures appear solid, even immovable, while simultaneously suggesting inner fragility. This tension — between hardness and intimacy — is central to the quiet power of his work.

The launch of *Rudolf Seibeb: Portraits of the Common* in Windhoek at The Project Room on 20 January 2026, followed by a second launch during the Investec Cape Town Art Fair on 18 February 2026, reflects the dual realities of Seibeb's practice: rooted in local community, yet increasingly resonant beyond national borders. In bringing these works together in book form, the ARAK Collection not only celebrates an important Namibian artist, but also asserts the relevance of Namibian stories in art history. The book is available for purchase at The Project Room in Windhoek. 📖

Dear Diary

A Summer Evening with a French Note



There's something magical about summer evenings in Namibia. The light has its own rhythm here, soft and slow, stretching the hours between day and night. As the sun dips behind the distant hills, the sky begins to blush in shades of rose and gold, and the air carries that familiar scent of dust, dry grass, and possibility.

It's the moment when the world exhales, when work and worries fade, and all that remains is stillness, heat, and the promise of a beautiful evening. That's usually when I pour myself a glass of rosé.

I buy my wines from Ricardo, my dear friend and favourite wine connoisseur in Windhoek. He owns a lovely shop called Manrico, a hidden gem filled with carefully curated household items, fine tableware, and exclusive wines and bubbles. Manrico isn't just a shop; it's an experience. The moment you walk in, you feel a sense of calm — everything is beautifully arranged, and Ricardo greets every guest with genuine warmth and that unmistakable sparkle in his eyes.

He offers what I'd call the best service in all of Namibia, attentive, personal, and delivered with true passion. You can tell that what he does is more than business; it's love. And that love shines most when he speaks about wine.

Ricardo has this rare gift of making you fall in love with the story behind every bottle. For him, wine is not just about taste; it's a journey, a memory, a reflection of the soil and the soul that made it. We often *fachsimpeln*, as we'd say in German, meaning we talk endlessly, passionately, and sometimes quite nerdlily about wine. We exchange discoveries, share our latest favourites, and compare which rosé captures the true spirit of summer.

A few weeks ago, I told him I was searching for something special — a drink that carries the lightness of Provence yet feels grounded in the raw beauty of Namibia. Ricardo smiled, reached for a bottle, and said, "Then this one is yours."

It was a pale pink rosé from the south of France — elegant, fresh, and full of life.

"She's delicate," he said, "but not shy, just like you."

I laughed and knew immediately: this would be the beginning of a new summer ritual.

That evening, inspired by both Provence and Windhoek, I created my own sundowner drink — a little *française* twist with a hint of Namibian soul.



Rosé Provençal – My French Summer Dream

Ingredients:

- 120 ml chilled rosé wine (preferably from Provence)
- 30 ml elderflower or lavender syrup
- 60 ml sparkling water or Crémant
- A squeeze of lemon juice
- Ice cubes
- A sprig of rosemary or lavender
- A few slices of strawberry or peach

Preparation:

Fill a large wine glass with ice. Add the rosé, syrup, and lemon juice. Top up with sparkling water or Crémant and stir gently. Garnish with rosemary or lavender and a few slices of fruit.

The result is simply divine, light and floral, with a hint of sweetness and the freshness of a summer breeze. It tastes like sunlight and laughter, like music and soft linen dresses, like a slow afternoon that refuses to end.

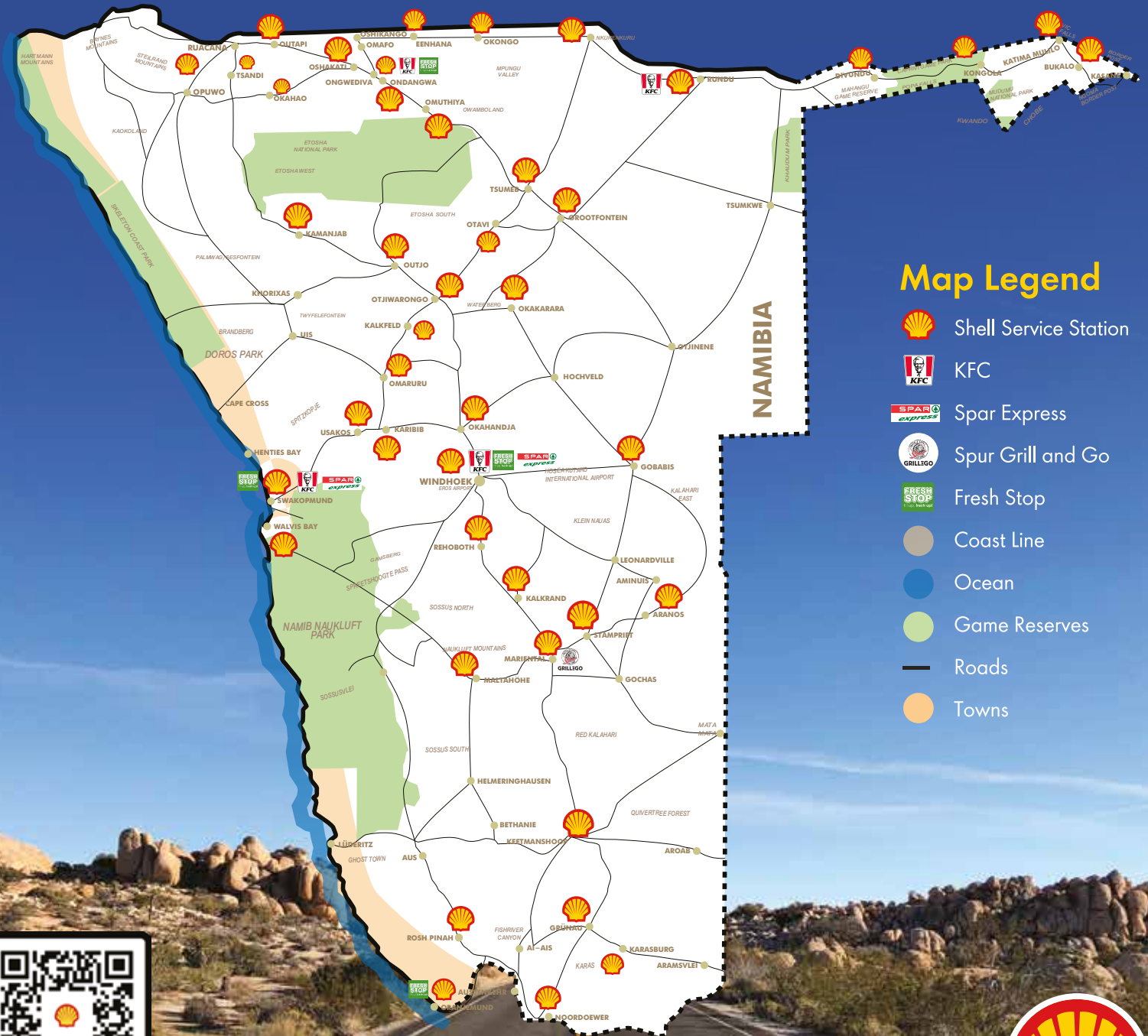
That night, I sat on my terrace, the veld cooling down around me. The rosemary from my garden swayed gently in the warm breeze, and somewhere in the distance, a jackal called. I took a sip and smiled.

In that glass, I could taste both worlds — the elegance of France and the untamed beauty of Namibia.

It was more than a drink; it was a reminder of how life weaves stories from contrasts, of how refinement and wilderness can coexist beautifully, just as they do in this land, and perhaps in me, too.

Santé & cheers from Windhoek, Sandra. 🍷

Whatever your journey, Choose Shell



SCAN ME





Crunch, crunch, crunch; an ode to the guild of guides

words by Karel Swanepoel

The vast majority of us can't drive where guided wheels crunch deliberately over sand patterned by crashing waves. Their steady synchronised rotations cut two perfectly parallel tracks in the pristine beach. Crunch, crunch, crunch. It is not just the permit you need, nor the desire, but the skills to safely navigate the mercurial hazards of the Namib Desert; skills only taught by experienced elders, themselves long-time members of this guild of the wild. Safari-clad, leather-skinned mentors who have spent decades building their livelihoods from the knowledge of sand, thorny bush and splendid southern stars.

Whether apprentice or master, their skills are honed and sharpened, sculpted so they can deliver guests from this sandy beach to that woodland campsite. They traverse the country via the dusty four-by-four express unique to their kind. A network of possibilities stretching North, South, East, and West. Some roads are gravel, and some are asphalt, and some don't even exist in this tidy world of digital maps. Each stretch they pass along serves a single purpose: to get waylanders from here to there.

Few in Namibia have gone from here to there as frequently and thoroughly as these tenacious 'GUIDES'. Gritty characters of distinction who have devoted their lives

to exploring every stretch of road in Namibia; all while being entertainers, cooks, nurses, and sometimes even parents to their beloved guests.

The guild's uniform is a distinct gamut of olive greens and bushbeat browns, copper-stained wrists, and shoes that scream comfort rather than aesthetic. They crisscross our country every day, moving between the multi-cultured citizens as part of them, but also as the agents to observe them. With uncanny precognition, they swerve and glide over potholes, pass erratic taxis, and wandering livestock. They drive and walk as if they have seen the very future they have been commissioned to deliver their guests to.

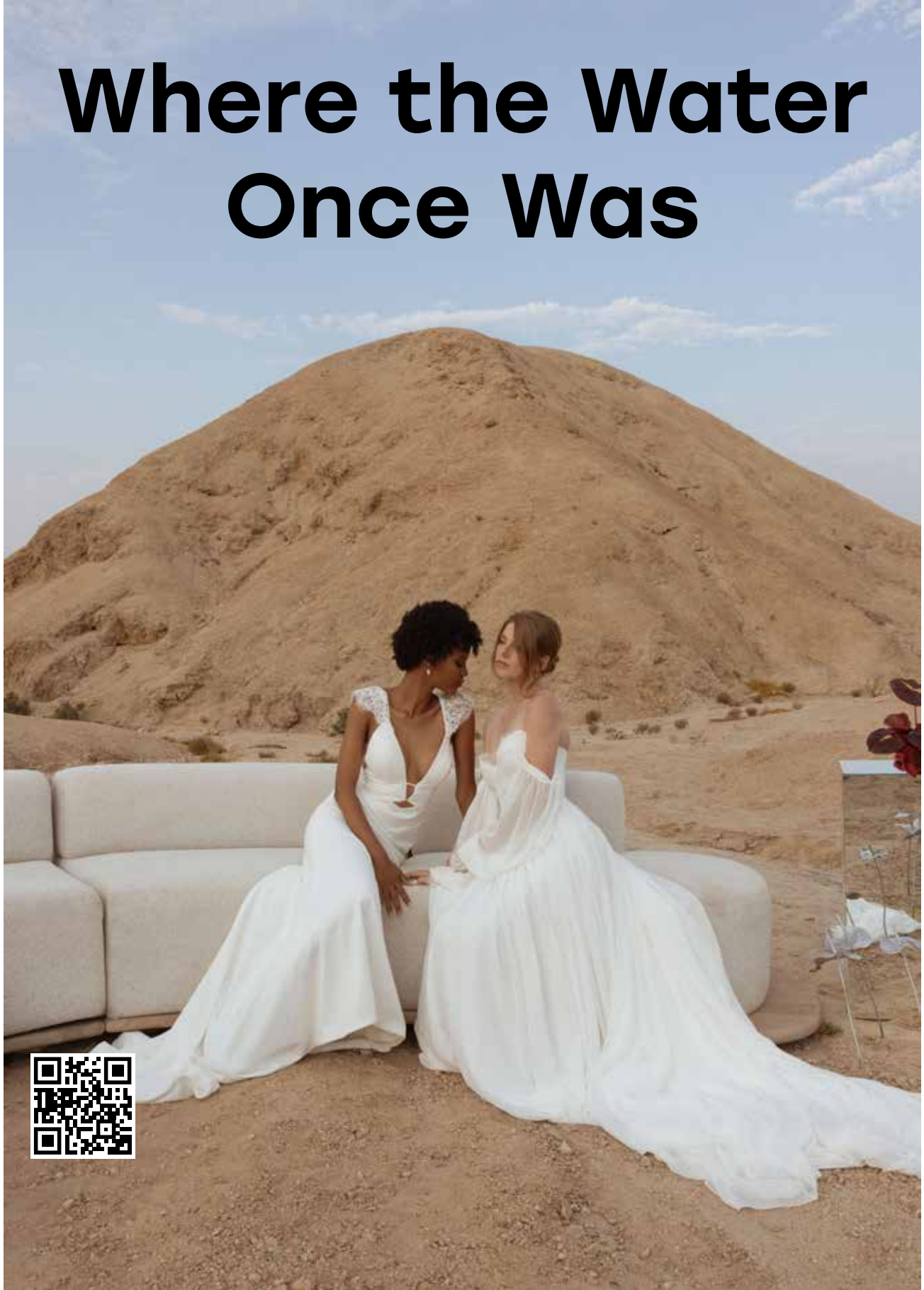
Emblazoned on their chest, a brand, a logo, a symbol of their allegiance to some operator. With their embroidered top left pockets, they reach their destination, happy, hot, and thirsty; the backs of their shirts wrinkled into fine horizontal folds, a testament to their dedication to keep the wheels rolling. Crunch, crunch, crunch. I would wager that these colourful souls would live on the road even if no one sent them!

Tourism in Namibia would not exist without the persistent conveyance of our guides. So sit back, pour yourself an ice-cold mug of pure abandon, enjoy the corrugation-induced massage, and let them guide you to tomorrow. 🌀

Michelangelo

—SPOTLIGHT—

Where the Water Once Was





How minimalism, place, and intention shaped an unforgettable Namibian visual narrative.



words by Anne Schaffer | photographs by Urban Lense Photography

When creatives put their heads and hearts together, magic happens. This magnificent collaboration – themed ‘Where the Water Once Was’ – took place in the extreme beauty of the Namibian landscape, the theatre of it captured by the photographic team. The result? A celebration of Namibia’s creativity and landscapes.

Namibia is a country of the most striking landscapes – from see-forever sandscapes to never-ending roads, from vast mountain ranges to breathtaking dunes, rich wildlife to wilderness, lagoons to cruel coastlines. A group of southern African creatives decided that there was no finer palette against which to showcase their continent, skills, and wares... and so this exquisitely visual collaboration was born.

Michelangelo quizzed designer Morgan Howells of Women Unleashed about the backstory to *Where the Water Once Was*.

Whose idea was this collaboration, and what was the thought process behind it?

Unleashed’s role in the collaboration was born out of pure coincidence and creative chemistry. I was meeting Juné from Urban Lense Photography for a coffee to explore the idea of collaborating as Namibian creatives. She mentioned that Shannon, founder of Hout, a South African-based event planning and curation company, was planning a styled shoot in the Namibian desert and asked if I wanted in.

Shannon’s vision centred around honouring the



untouched desert and the stories beneath it, showing how Namibia can inspire a creative industry as bold and expansive as the land itself.

The momentum was immediate. Shannon and I swapped references, brainstormed, and refined the concept together. During a Cape Town trip, we visited Rosa Karoo, the bridal boutique that took part, armed with a vision and Shannon's beautiful creative brief. To our surprise, everyone approached was enthusiastic and willing to be involved.

Building this idea with the team and watching it come alive was deeply rewarding. Together, we shaped a cohesive, thoughtful story that celebrates Namibia's creativity and landscapes. From the start, I knew it was something the country hadn't seen before: minimal, grounded in place and design, and unmistakably Namibian.

What started as a conversation quickly evolved into a wider collaborative effort. It truly was two young creatives in their twenties with stars in their eyes, building something bigger than ourselves through conversation, curiosity, and shared excitement.

How long was this in the making?

I first heard about the concept in May from Juné. I met Shannon for the first time in June, where the project finally came to life for me. The shoot itself took place in mid-October, so it was months of planning, refining, sourcing, and coordinating across two countries.

What was the motivation behind the choice of landscape?

The overarching theme was *Where the Water Once Was*. The vision was to find a dry, vast space where water once flowed thousands of years ago. Originally, we explored shooting in Sossusvlei, but the logistics - especially transporting the UNLEASHED pieces from the new furniture collection—proved too demanding.

We then considered the dunes around Swakopmund, but finding an untouched, truly pristine section was more challenging than anticipated.

Ultimately, we landed on the Moon Landscape in western Namibia, and it turned out to be serendipitous. The textures,

There are an estimated 30 billion chickens on Earth at any given moment - more than any other bird species in history.



the silence, the drama — it offered a raw, ancient stillness that echoed the concept perfectly. It felt like a place carved by water millions of years ago, now waiting quietly for a story like this.

What was the goal here?

We wanted to shed new light on Namibian beauty, but through simplicity. Namibia is known for its iconic tourist landscapes, but there is an entire language of subtlety and stillness that often goes unseen.

This shoot was about:

- presenting Namibia as a world-class travel and wedding destination,
- showing how minimal, intentional styling can allow the landscape to speak for itself,
- celebrating Namibian and South African creative talent, and
- introducing UNLEASHED's first furniture collection (The Ruth Collection) in a setting that honours its inspiration: fluidity, silence, and sculptural form.

As collaborators, our shared aim was to create something truly new for Namibia — something international in calibre yet deeply rooted in the soul of our land.

Who were the designers/stylists who choreographed the experience?

The creative spark for the shoot was initiated by Shannon from HOUT, who crafted the concept and established the creative direction. Her vision set the foundation for what the collaboration could become.

Once UNLEASHED joined the project, we assisted in refining the idea and introduced a bold direction: incorporating designer furniture into the landscape to emulate a wedding setting carved out of nature itself.

For UNLEASHED, this shoot was especially meaningful, as it marked the debut of our first designer furniture range. We led the furniture integration, ensuring each piece was not only complemented by the styling but felt naturally rooted in the Moon Landscape. The furniture became an anchor for the story, grounding the aesthetic and reinforcing the theme of fluidity, form, and timeless Namibian beauty.



Shannon's refined conceptual approach, combined with our design-led perspective, created a strong creative partnership. Together with the wider team of photographers, florists, models, and collaborators, we choreographed the narrative — balancing fashion, landscape, and design into one cohesive, elevated visual experience.

Tell us about the furniture.

The furniture featured in the shoot forms part of The Ruth Collection, UNLEASHED's first bespoke designer furniture range. This collection includes the Elix Dining Table and Chair, the Desert Armchair, the Reverie Couch, and the Signature Side Table, each piece designed in-house as a sculptural expression of Namibian form and movement.

Creating this collection pushed us to stretch our creative

boundaries and bring something entirely new into the Namibian design space. We wanted to craft pieces that are both functional and artistic - furniture that feels equally at home in a gallery, a boutique lodge, or a contemporary residence.

Each silhouette reflects the quiet fluidity of our landscapes: the motion of water long disappeared, the rise and fall of dunes, the softness carved into stone over millennia.

These pieces are incredibly special to us. They mark the beginning of a new era of design in Namibia—one where locally designed furniture stands proudly on an international stage. Debuting the collection in the Moon Landscape felt both meaningful and symbolic, allowing the pieces to interact with the environment that inspired their creation.

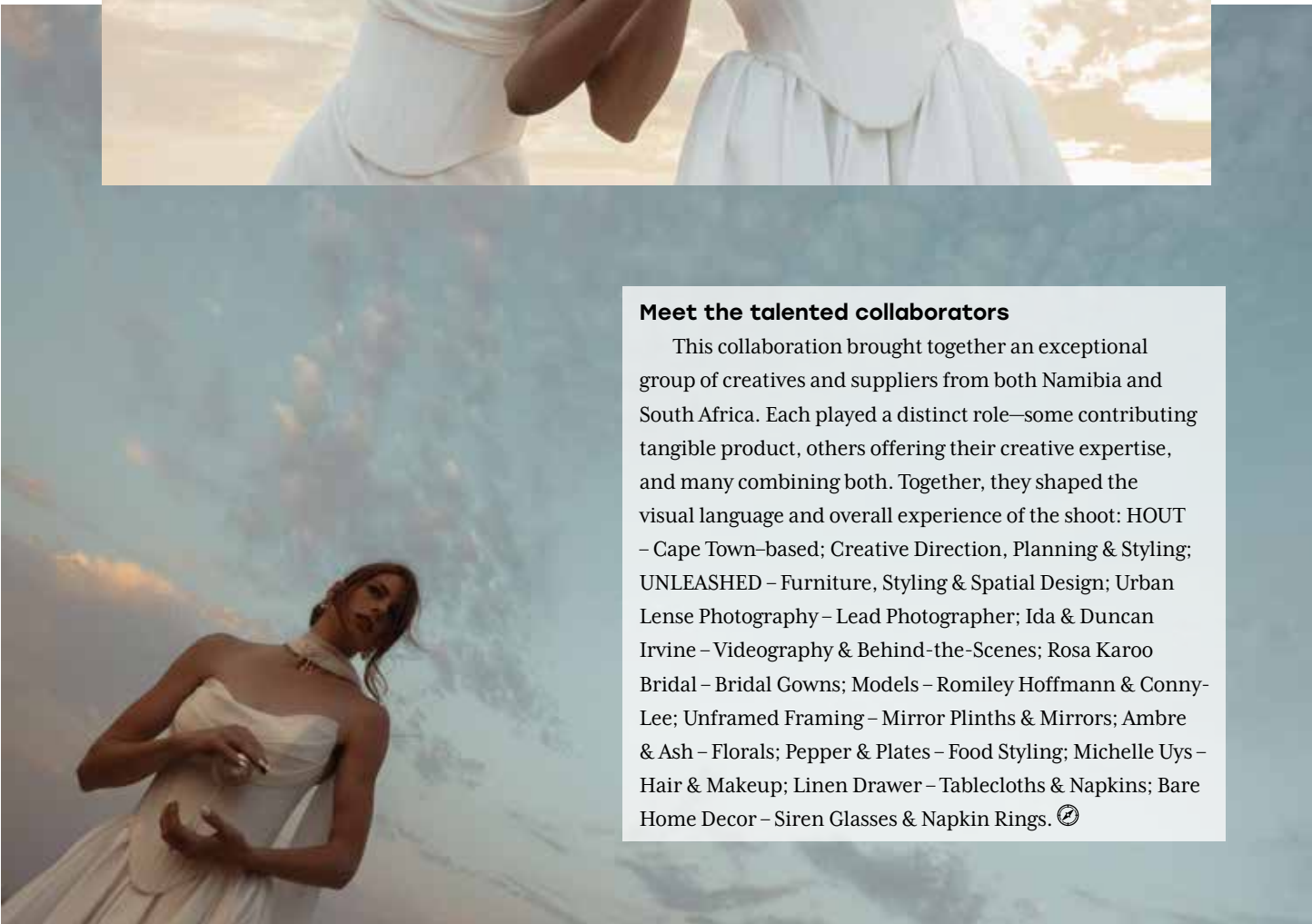
Michelangelo

—SPOTLIGHT—



Meet the talented collaborators

This collaboration brought together an exceptional group of creatives and suppliers from both Namibia and South Africa. Each played a distinct role—some contributing tangible product, others offering their creative expertise, and many combining both. Together, they shaped the visual language and overall experience of the shoot: HOUT – Cape Town-based; Creative Direction, Planning & Styling; UNLEASHED – Furniture, Styling & Spatial Design; Urban Lense Photography – Lead Photographer; Ida & Duncan Irvine – Videography & Behind-the-Scenes; Rosa Karoo Bridal – Bridal Gowns; Models – Romiley Hoffmann & Conny-Lee; Unframed Framing – Mirror Plinths & Mirrors; Ambre & Ash – Florals; Pepper & Plates – Food Styling; Michelle Uys – Hair & Makeup; Linen Drawer – Tablecloths & Napkins; Bare Home Decor – Siren Glasses & Napkin Rings. 🌿





Remembering Magical Ongongo

words and photographs by Linda de Jager



The water flowing from the magical waterfall at Ongongo campsite.



Guesthouse manager Annatjie Jordaan in the Sesfontein guesthouse garden she created.

One of my most unforgettable memories of Namibia is of Ongongo Waterfall Campsite near Warmquelle.

‘Ongongo’ means ‘magical’ in Herero.

Exhausted and dusty after a film shoot about a decade ago, I found relief in a remote canyon in northwestern Namibia, featuring a small natural pool under a small waterfall and well-maintained campsites.

Pure bliss.

The whole team of documentary makers had the privilege of skinny dipping with a charming little turtle idling in the lukewarm water of the pool.

The next day, we left the little creature behind and continued to chase ‘bigger fish’: We set out to find desert-adapted elephants and rhinos for our film, leaving Ongongo well-rested and enchanted.

This was, of course, complemented by nine quality campsites with private ablution facilities and hot showers.

Ongongo Waterfall Campsite is situated about 6 km from Warmquelle in the Kunene region, and approximately 25 km from Sesfontein. The nearest service stations are at Sesfontein and Palmwag, some 90 km south of this campsite on the C43.

When I recently went back, I was glad to hear the spot still had a year-round pool, just as I remembered.

Sesfontein Guesthouse manager Annatjie Jordaan, who now also manages Ongongo Waterfall Campsite, shared this news.

Ten years later, I was eager to revisit Ongongo.

I ask Annatjie to explain the connection between the two businesses while checking into Sesfontein Guesthouse in town.

She says Sesfontein Guesthouse is a privately owned business, but Ongongo is a communal campsite.

“The Warmquelle community owns it. We have a certain percentage that goes back to the community, and only community members are employed there.”

She says natural erosion, primarily from falling rocks, necessitates an annual clean-up of the pool and reinforcing its sides.

You can secure a booking at Ongongo Waterfall Campsite online, via Sesfontein Guesthouse’s email, or simply drive through.

Annatjie says they have credit card facilities on site, with cash also accepted.

While you don’t need a 4x4 to visit Sesfontein Guesthouse, Ongongo’s access road requires one, she says.



Spic and Span

Once I had satisfied my curiosity about the Ongongo Waterfall Campsite, I was ready to appreciate what Annatjie has achieved with Sesfontein Guesthouse.

‘Spick and span’ is the phrase that comes to mind. At face value, this is a place where you arrive late and leave early on the way to another destination. It offers a small swimming pool for a quick dip when the heat hits you (local temperatures can reach up to 48 °C in summer), a solid meal you can pre-book, a hot shower, Wi-Fi, and staff who genuinely want to be there for their guests.

The rooms are compact but very clean and private, with a supply of filter coffee for those of us who can’t start the day without caffeine.

The snow-white towels on the bed are so skilfully folded, they could pass for origami masterpieces after a cold beer or two.

This is Annatjie’s touch, who somehow manages to bring a bit of comfort and class to this remote little town.

“When I heard the position opened up here in 2023, I was really excited,” she says.

The guest house has been owned by Leander Borg since 2016. He is also the man behind Namibia’s well-known

annual Desert Dash cycling event.

Annatjie has made her mark at another small town near Brandberg – Uis.

She says she was the manager of the Brandberg supermarket for nearly 10 years, where she acquired some life skills she applies at Sesfontein. To organise and complete practical tasks efficiently is one, she says.

Annatjie’s motto in life is taking responsibility for her actions. She credits this to David Prinsloo, a farmer in the Tsumeb area.

“He taught me that if you take ownership of whatever project you are working on, the chances of success are always much higher.

“And the energy I invest in Sesfontein and its community reflects this,” she says.

“It’s peaceful. It’s amazing. We’re always busy with something – gathering rocks, gathering wood, building something, or working in the garden.”

As a result, many of the regular guests comment on the steady and deliberate progress made each year to improve the space.

“My staff members have taught me a lot about tracking, animals, insects, and local culture. We now have nine

Only about 2–3% of Europe remains truly wild. Namibia, by contrast, still holds some of the wildest landscapes on Earth.



A campfire at Sesfontein Guesthouse's Hoanib elephant sleepout, where guests can explore the dry Hoanib riverbed.



employees. I have Damaras, Himbas, and Hereros working for me,” she says.

She says one of the best discoveries she has made when it comes to traditional cooking is traditional ‘rooster’ cornbread cake, made over the fire for guests.

Six Fountains

Sesfontein safeguards the secret of six fountains.

Annatjie says Leander overcame water supply issues at the guest house by sinking a borehole, thanks to which a lovely herb and succulent garden is blossoming.

“Gardening is a big passion of mine. One of the challenges moving up here is to find plants that can withstand the heat,” she says.

Other than that, she points to challenges like finding stock, as the closest supermarket is 150 km away.

The cosy scene greeting guests at Sesfontein Guesthouse is made even more charming by a few hens and a rooster, who help me wake up before dawn. I aim to leave very early this time, but there is more to do if I pass through again, says Annatje – like tracking local wildlife.

Sesfontein Guesthouse also offers a Hoanib elephant sleepout, allowing guests to explore the dry Hoanib

riverbed where desert-adapted elephants roam.

“After lunch under an Anna tree, participants track the elephants and set up dome tents for the night. The evening includes dinner by the campfire and stargazing, followed by coffee and rusks in the morning before breakfast back at the guesthouse.”

Annatjie says guests are also offered a day trip option if they prefer to return to the guesthouse.

The rhino tracking sleepout features a scenic drive through the mountains, where guests share lunch with rangers before tracking black rhinos. After setting up camp and enjoying dinner, the next morning starts with coffee and rusks, followed by brunch.

A Steady Hand for Sesfontein

Apart from the friendly smile, Annatjie’s colourful tattoos are hard to miss. The one on her left hand symbolises her endurance, having raised three children as a single mother.

It’s clear she’s come a long way to create a warm home for herself, her children, and guests at Sesfontein Guesthouse, sharing her journey of endurance and lived message of taking ownership of everything she takes on. 🌱

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ZARA DAVIS [GBR] World Champion [2012 & 2017]
riding down the channel at full speed.

Speed Limit... What Speed Limit!

Where Namibia Redefines the Meaning of Speed

words by Bruno de Comarmond [GBR] | photographs by Pete Davis [GBR] François Lorho [FRA]



BJORN DUNKERBECK [ESP] 42 times World Champion and longest sponsored Sportsman for RED BULL travelling down the world famous Lüderitz Speed Challenge canal going on to achieve his fastest ever maximum speed of 103.67kph.

“Faster, faster, and faster!” — words famously echoed by one of the world’s most decorated athletes, Björn Dunkerbeck.

Dunkerbeck holds no fewer than 42 world championship titles, has surpassed 100 kph on a windsurf, and remains the longest-serving sponsored Red Bull ambassador in action sports history. He achieved his fastest-ever speed at the 2022 Lüderitz Speed Challenge (LSC), recording an astonishing maximum speed of 103.67 kph.

The Lüderitz Speed Challenge was the brainchild of Frenchman Sébastien Cattelan, the first person in history to break both the mythical 50-knot barrier (2008) and 55-knot barrier (2010) on kiteboarding equipment. However, it was the 2012 LSC that truly catapulted Lüderitz into the global spotlight.

Knots are the standard maritime unit of speed, with one knot equal to one nautical mile per hour (1.852 kilometres per hour).

Why? For the first time ever, seven windsurfers surpassed 50 knots (92.66 kph) at a single event. Almost overnight, the once little-known coastal town of Lüderitz featured prominently in the world’s leading windsurfing magazines, across YouTube, and on major international television networks.

As of December 2025, the LSC has generated over one hundred national records and more than twenty world

speed windsurfing records. Furthermore, the Lüderitz Speed Challenge remains the only Namibian phenomenon to appear annually in the Guinness World Records book.

So what makes the second lagoon at Lüderitz such a prime speed-sailing location?

The answer lies in the Namib Desert winds — consistent, powerful, and relentless. Blowing at speeds of 35 to 55 knots during certain periods of the year (typically between November and January), these winds create ideal conditions for record-breaking runs. To maximise performance, a specially engineered 1,000-metre-long channel is constructed alongside the second lagoon, allowing athletes to chase and surpass their personal bests in controlled conditions.

Among the event’s most notable competitors is Antoine Albeau (France), the current and 27-time world champion. At LSC 2012, Albeau set a new world record of 52.05 knots (96.40 kph) over the designated 500-metre course. During the ferocious conditions of LSC 2015, he went on to break his own world record eighteen times in a single morning, eventually recording a blistering 53.25 knots (98.62 kph).

Remarkably, at LSC 2024, Albeau once again pushed the limits, setting a new personal best and world record of 53.49 knots (99.06 kph), edging close to the mythical 100 kph average speed over 500 metres.

All speeds achieved at LSC events are officially



BRENDAN LORHO - fastest U-21 in the world and appears in 2026 Guinness World Records Book.



JENNA GIBSON [GBR] World Champion and the first female to break 50knots / 92.60kph [max. speed] on a windsurf.

ratified on site by a commissioner from the World Sailing Speed Record Council (WSSRC – UK), ensuring absolute credibility.

Tackling the legendary Lüderitz winds and the man-made channel requires exceptional skill, courage, determination, and nerves of steel. The achievements of the world's leading female speed windsurfers are particularly remarkable.

Why? With an average weight of around 95 kg, male competitors typically possess greater upper-body mass and strength to control their equipment in extreme conditions. Female competitors, often smaller in stature, must battle the same ferocious winds with less physical leverage, making their accomplishments all the more extraordinary.

Jenna Gibson (United Kingdom), the current world champion and featured in the *Guinness World Records 2026* edition, is the first and only female speed windsurfer to break the 50-knot barrier, achieving a top average speed of 48.02 knots (88.93 kph) at LSC 2024.

Her peers — former world champions Zara Davis (UK) and Heidi Ulrich (Switzerland) — have recorded impressive speeds of 46.49 knots (86.09 kph) and 47.20 knots (87.41 kph), respectively. Truly outstanding achievements. These three women more than deserve the title of World Champion — and then some.

LSC 2024 also revealed an exceptional young talent: Brendan Lorho (France). On 1 December 2024, Lorho

became the youngest windsurfer in history to surpass the 50-knot mark, clocking an average speed of 50.62 knots (93.75 kph) over the 500-metre course. At the time, he was exactly 19 years and 171 days old, making it the fastest speed ever recorded in the under-21 category.

This extraordinary feat earned Lorho a place in the French edition of the Guinness World Records 2026. He also holds the title of PWA Youth Boys Fin Champion 2025, successfully defending his crown by winning 44 of the 47 eliminations he contested — a remarkable achievement.

The event's historian and long-time supporter, Bruno de Comarmond, explains that while speed-sailing events take place around the world, the Lüderitz Speed Challenge stands apart.

"Namibia and Lüderitz feature in the Guinness World Records book every year because of the LSC. We are the fastest, and we are the best. The event relies heavily on sponsorship and environmental clearance, so there are no guarantees for the future. However, one thing is certain — Lüderitz has secured its place in the history of speed windsurfing forever."

For those wishing to see the world champions' actual racing equipment, a visit to the Namibia Maritime Museum, located in Diaz Street, Lüderitz, is highly recommended. It is truly a must-see attraction.

For thrilling Lüderitz Speed Challenge footage, visit YouTube. 📺



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Michelangelo

—CHANGEMAKER—



Dr. Rudie van Vuuren

Linda de Jager in conversation with Dr. Rudie van Vuuren | photographs by N/a'an ku sê

Conservationist Dr. Rudie van Vuuren is no stranger to controversy and is not afraid to effect change. As the saying goes, when all else fails, look at the scoreboard.



Over the past two decades, van Vuuren and his life partner, Marlice van Vuuren, have been at the forefront of conservation efforts in Namibia, creating the N/a'an ku sê Ecotourism Collection from scratch and offering experiences well loved by tourists.

He is a medical doctor who was also a member of the Namibian national cricket and rugby teams and played at World Cups in both sports.

A registered pilot, van Vuuren seems to have the sky as the limit. But what drives this changemaker?

Q: What motivates you as a changemaker?

Late President Hage Geingob said we must be valuable citizens. My goal is to be one of the most valuable citizens of our country. If my actions benefit Namibia, then I am committed.

My purpose drives me. I define it as striving to be the man God intended me to be, using my talents, energy and time on earth to help make Namibia a better place.

Q: Who had the greatest influence in your life?

My dad inspired me through his entrepreneurial spirit and wisdom. He was truly the epitome of being a Christian. When he passed away, Jan Verburg, our Dutch partner, became like a father to me.

My mother also played a key role in shaping my values; she is the most positive person I know. Marlice, of course, took my life in a totally different direction than I had planned. She helped me find my purpose.

Q: What is the core purpose of your organisation as changemakers?

Landscape conservation is central to our work. All our purposes are deeply connected, with wildlife protection at the core.

Our purpose is to protect landscapes, conserve wildlife and improve lives in Namibia. We aim to be changemakers for sustainable good in Africa. These objectives are interconnected and reinforce one another.



Q: How do you address community needs as a changemaker?

We focus on healthcare and education. We do not have unlimited funds and rely heavily on partners to fund projects where we believe we can make a genuine, sustainable impact.

As a small, self-funded organization, we must ensure every project delivers high impact over the long term.

Q: What impact have you made on conservation as a changemaker?

We protect 101,000 hectares of land under the N/a'an ku sê umbrella. Expanding protected areas strengthens our conservation impact. Rapid responses to human-wildlife conflict are also essential to our work.

Over the last 18 years, we have attended physically to more than 456 cases of human-wildlife conflict. Our collar, release and share methodology has shown that in 90% of cases the perceived problem animal is not the culprit, leading to greater tolerance for wildlife on farmland.

In the past 28 months, we have cleaned 55 tons of rubbish from the Namibian coastline. On 3 January 2026 alone, we collected 2.1 tons in one day.

Q: What advice would you give investors looking to work in Namibia?

Respect and take on board local indigenous knowledge. Patience is essential. Find a reliable, trustworthy local partner, and don't assume what works in Europe or America will necessarily work in Namibia. It is difficult to build a strong workforce in Namibia because we are so few and certain skills are just not available.

Namibia is one of the safest investment destinations due to government stability and strong leadership. I am a fourth-generation Namibian, and I continue to invest in my country.

Q: The Namibian government is updating outdated wildlife legislation, and you have been instrumental in advocating this change. Tell me more.

We have been involved in efforts to modernise wildlife laws. The animal welfare laws of the 1960s and the Nature Conservation Ordinance of the 1970s are archaic and detrimental to both animal welfare and conservation.

We were involved in two court cases against the MET (Ministry of Environment and Tourism) because we believe animals are sentient beings worthy of protection and we

Plastic's modern story begins in 1907, and just over a century later, **it has been found in human brains and newborn babies.**



believe if we are asked to help an animal in distress, the 1975 Nature Conservation ordinance does not apply which is what eventually transpired from the case. To go to court against government is not something you want to do but we did so because we believed we have a moral obligation to stand for what we believed is right and not look away. We see the MET as our partner but sometimes partners disagree and sometimes through that conflict comes growth and good outcomes, it certainly seems that this was the case and we now have a strong working relationship with MET.

We are not an animal rights organisation, but we will stand firm on animal welfare and helping animals in distress.

Q: What new projects do you have in response to climate change?

I am working with like-minded individuals to reintroduce buffalo, which were historically widespread in Namibia.

Due to climate change, land use will increasingly shift towards wildlife utilization, both consumptive and non-consumptive. Livestock farming is becoming more difficult because of increasing drought and extreme weather.

We are also working hard to put more land under

protection, human wildlife conflict is escalating and so called problem animals need alternatives to just being put down.

Q: How do you see the future of tourism in Namibia?

Tourism will hopefully become more exclusive, focusing on quality rather than mass tourism. It will be more comparable to Botswana than South Africa, reducing pressure on resources and infrastructure. Namibia is a country with immaculate beauty and diversity and in our world tourism needs to have a story, a purpose and sustainability. I also see with the recent under 19 Cricket World Cup that Namibia hosted that sports tourism might grow because as sport codes become more professional like cricket did the scope for nice tourism grows. In my opinion if tourism can bring change for good we are on the right track.

Q: What are the effects of foreign investment on conservation?

Foreign investors with the right intentions create major conservation and economic opportunities.

One partner, Albert ten Brinke, bought land with our

You are slightly heavier in the morning than at night.



foundation from an absentee foreign landowner. The property previously employed eight people as a hunting farm. Today, Timbila Nature Reserve is managed by N/a'an ku sê, employs 90 people, has a primary school, and is home to conflict elephants, lions, leopards, hyenas and more. Equally our other partners Jan Verburg and the van Uden group have created almost 700 employment opportunities, helped establish 4 schools, 4 churches, helped protect 65 rhino's and much more. This is the scoreboard and one only needs to look at the scoreboard to realise what can be done.

Q: How would you describe your mindset as a changemaker?

When people say something is impossible, I feel I'm on the right path it appeals to me. Overcoming challenges is a source of fulfilment for me, I believe in doing tough things. My purpose motivates me, and although I have made many mistakes I try and learn and the more I learn the more I realise that if you have a purpose bigger than yourself you have to be better everyday not for yourself but for those you serve, who believe in you and for those you care about.

Q: What has been the economic impact of your efforts?

Our organisation employs almost 700 people, mostly in tourism. This work is a major job creator and contributes

significantly to the local economy. Over the past 18 years, we have managed more than N\$1 billion in foreign investment that has driven changemaking for sustainable good.

Q: How do you apply indigenous wisdom, and what is your favourite San expression?

The San never destroy what they use; they ensure enough is left behind to regenerate. We strive to follow this philosophy, ensuring our successes are sustainable and respectful of nature.

N/a'an ku sê is the San word meaning "God looks after us". This is my favorite sentence because I know there is a Higher Hand who looks after us I am merely an instrument.

Q: How do your commercial ventures support your changemaking mission?

We run sustainable businesses in winemaking, tourism, filming and construction. These businesses are run commercially, with the clear goal of generating profit to sustain our core mission financially. We are always looking for innovative business opportunities to grow our business and make more money so we can do more.

Q: How does your foundation fit into your business model?

Our foundation is not a corporate social responsibility

Tardigrades can be boiled, frozen, dried, or sent into space, **and still survive.**



(CSR) project; it is the core of our business. All activities support and revolve around it, it is who we are.

Q: How do you sustain your projects financially?

We built the first lodge at N/a'an ku sê to fund the first clinic for the San people over 20 years ago. Today, sustainable businesses, donations and grants support our work, including the N/a'an ku sê Ecotourism Collection. Impact work is often the result when we partner with compatible foreign investors and partners.

Q: How do you help others become changemakers?

We act as philanthropic asset managers, helping people invest in conservation and social upliftment projects. Our reliability has made us a trusted partner for those wanting to make a positive impact in Namibia. We have built a track record and the scoreboard speaks for itself.

Q: You became a registered pilot to save time covering the vast distances between your business interests. Your fleet is expanding. What are your future plans in this context and why is this relevant?

The Cessna 182 and Caravan allow us to respond faster and more cost-effectively to human wildlife conflict situations or to help with our social projects. The Cessna Caravan V5-ROB

is also chartered through Desert Air and African Profile Safaris which is a means of income.

Marlice is learning to fly a gyrocopter for anti-poaching operations. I love flying.

Q: What have you learned from your life partner, Marlice, and how has she changed your life?

I planned to become a cardiothoracic surgeon, and she changed the course of my life. We share a passion for nature, wildlife and Namibia. She speaks Ju/'hoansi, as do our children. Marlice grew up more San Bushman than Afrikaans, and is fiercely committed to what she believes in.

Q: What do you teach your two sons, Zacheo and Nicklai, about managing change?

Love what you do. If you love being a changemaker don't expect to find reward in money and don't think you will be money rich, but expect to find gratitude and more reward than you can ever soak up.

If you want to effect change you must firmly believe and know what you want to change and why. If change is about yourself, don't try. If it's about something bigger than yourself, then you have found purpose, and changemaking for good will follow. The only change you have to do for yourself is to be a better man everyday because then you can become a changemaker for good for others. 🌱



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A wide-angle photograph of a desert canyon. The sun is low in the sky, creating a strong lens flare and casting long shadows. In the center of the canyon floor, four people are gathered around a small table covered with a white cloth. The canyon walls are high and layered with sedimentary rock. The foreground shows a rocky, uneven ground.

Beyond the View: **An Active Way to Travel**

Why Namibia Is Best Discovered on Foot, by Bike, and Beyond the Vehicle Window

words by Stephanie Faul | photographs by Journeys Namibia



Namibia is a country that should be experienced with all your senses — not watched from a distance. It is a land to be walked, ridden, and felt, revealing its stories only to those who move through it.

It is not a place you simply observe from a vehicle window. It is a land of space and silence, of textures and light, of ancient rocks and restless wind. To truly appreciate it, you have to walk ridgelines, cycle the gravel roads, feel the sand under your feet, and sense its vastness in your chest.

Journeys Namibia offers an activity holiday that does exactly that — inviting guests to move through the landscape rather than merely pass by it. Across a collection of remote lodges and camps, each set in a dramatically different environment, guests can hike, cycle, explore, and engage with the land in ways that are both invigorating and deeply grounding.

At the southern edge of the country, perched on the rim of the Fish River Canyon, Fish River Lodge delivers one of Namibia's most powerful active experiences. The canyon is a geological masterpiece — vast, raw, and endlessly shifting in colour. Here, guided multi-day hikes lead guests into this ancient chasm, following winding paths along the canyon floor and high above its sculpted walls. These hikes are immersive journeys through time, where every layer of rock reflects history, and emotion forever locked in nature.

For those who prefer a gentler pace, rim walks offer shorter but breathtaking encounters with the canyon. Early mornings bring crisp air and bird calls echoing through the void, while sunsets paint the cliffs in fiery reds and golds. Mountain biking along the plateau adds another dimension — a sense of freedom and flow as you glide through wide open spaces with the canyon always present on the horizon.



Between the 1500s and 1800s, women in parts of Europe and the Middle East were discouraged from drinking coffee, **as it was believed to make them rebellious.**



It is an active holiday, yes — but one that feeds the soul as much as the muscles.

Further north, in the heart of the Erongo Mountains, Ondudu Safari Lodge offers a more intimate, forested landscape. Granite boulders rise like sculptures among acacia trees, creating a labyrinth of trails that invite exploration on foot or by bicycle. Here, hiking feels personal and meditative. Trails wind through valleys and over rocky outcrops, revealing fabulous birdlife, hidden waterholes, and sweeping mountain views.

Cycling through this terrain is playful, with ever-changing scenery and the chance to encounter wildlife along the way. Ondudu's activities are perfectly suited to guests who enjoy moving at their own rhythm — stopping to listen to birds, pausing in the shade of a fig tree, and feeling

part of the landscape rather than a visitor to it.

Another mesmerizing destination is the Skeleton Coast — a place that defies expectation.

Shipwreck Lodge stands alone in a wilderness along the coast, and activity here feels like stepping into another world. The lodge's Hoarusib River drive takes guests through dry riverbeds lined with towering clay castles, sculpted by wind and time into cathedral-like forms. These surreal formations are unlike anything else in Namibia, and exploring them on foot brings their scale and fragility into focus.

A guided beach walk follows the tide line, revealing shells, driftwood, and traces of life in this harsh environment. The reward is a beach lunch set against the Atlantic's endless horizon — a moment of quiet luxury in one of the world's most remote places. For those seeking



adrenaline, quad biking dunes and dune boarding down soft slopes add a playful edge to the experience, turning the desert into a natural playground.

High on a plateau overlooking the Etendeka landscape, Grootberg Lodge offers diverse activities with a strong conservation focus. Guided plateau walks traverse open grasslands with sweeping views, while rhino tracking excursions offer a rare chance to follow these iconic animals on foot alongside experienced trackers. It is a humbling experience — reading tracks in the sand, learning to interpret the land, and understanding the delicate balance between wildlife and community.

The Hoada Campsite offers a deeper human connection to place. A guided walk to a Damara farm introduces guests to traditional ways of life that have endured in this rugged environment. You walk through the land with those who

know it intimately, sharing stories, customs and daily rhythms. It is not just an activity — it is cultural exchange in its most authentic form.

What unites all these experiences is the philosophy behind them. This is not adventure for spectacle alone. It is movement with meaning. Each hike, cycle and walk becomes a way to understand Namibia's landscapes, its people, and its history. Guests return not only with photographs, but with stories etched into memory — of silence on a canyon rim, of wind on a dune, of footsteps beside a tracker, of laughter shared on a dusty trail.

An activity holiday with Journeys Namibia is not about ticking boxes. It is about slowing down by moving more. It is about earning your view, feeling the land beneath your feet, and discovering that Namibia reveals its deepest beauty to those willing to walk it. 🌀



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Where the Kavango River slows the day to a hush, Simanya River Lodge offers water facing suites, misty mornings, and sunsets mirrored in glassy current. Getting here is part of the calm: from Windhoek it's an easy six-hour drive north, then west beyond Nkurenkuru—just 13 kilometres further, to the river's edge. From Etosha's Namutoni/Von Lindequist Gate, join the scenic B15, the locally loved "Timber Route," winding through quiet woodlands, villages, and

through quiet woodlands, villages, and baobab horizons before meeting the Kavango's green belt. At the lodge, tranquillity continues, silent river cruises, curated onboard dining, and unhurried evenings at The Fancy Fisherman, our fireside pub where stories and local gin flow. As the only upmarket stay for 130 kilometres, Simanya is a true hideaway: a gentle threshold from arid plains to riverside serenity, where the journey naturally slows.





Winemaker Braam Gericke at work.



Desert wine with a purpose

*Turning investor backing into
conservation success*

words by Linda de Jager | photographs N/a'an ku sê



On the edge of the Namib Desert, where vineyards should not exist and conservation is often constrained by funding, Neuras Wine and Wildlife Estate has forged an unlikely model of success.

Founded by medical doctor and conservationist Rudie van Vuuren, the vineyard in the Hardap region has achieved international recognition, winning medals for its wines and spirits -- despite extreme heat, minimal rainfall, and wildlife challenges.

Van Vuuren discovered the site by chance while flying over the area, and later bought and integrated it with his conservation work under the N/a'an ku sê Foundation.

He says the wine estate aligns perfectly with the foundation's aims of conserving the landscapes of Namibia, protecting the wildlife, and improving the lives of the people it works with.

"We're proud of our wine. It took 11 years to perfect," he says. Success came after hiring experienced winemaker and

viticulturist Braam Gericke, who studied winemaking at the University of Stellenbosch and learned the craft hands-on at vineyards and cellars in the Western Cape.

"The idea of making wine in a desert intrigued me from the start. When the opportunity eventually came, it felt like stepping into a landscape that demands simplicity, honesty, and constant adaptation.

"Neuras came into my life as a place where winemaking isn't only about technique, but about listening, adapting, and keeping winemaking honest," he says.

And he must be doing something right, as Neuras snatched double gold at the Michelangelo International Wine Awards for its Ruby Dessert Wine. The following year, the estate grabbed gold across the board at the Gilbert & Gaillard International Challenge, with a double gold for its Nappa.

It also earned gold for its Nappa and silver for Ruby Dessert at the Vitis Vinifera Awards, plus a silver at Michelangelo for its Nappa in 2025.



Wine lovers can only taste the wine at lodges which are part of the N/a'an ku sê Ecotourism Collection, and the establishment does not export.

“Our wines are pure, concentrated and honest. We bottle everything on site at Neuras . . .

“We work with extreme heat, very little rain, and large temperature shifts between day and night. The climate shapes the wine as much as our terroir,” he says.

The estate uses ancient, pure underground springs for drip irrigation, allowing grape cultivation in one of the driest regions outside Chile’s Atacama Desert.

“Our water is crystal clear, cool and low in salinity. In a place like this, that is extraordinary. The water keeps the vines healthy, sustains wildlife and sets the limits. Our five natural springs are the reason why it’s even possible to produce wine at Neuras,” Gericke says.

Van Vuuren says they opted to carbon-date the water. “The first documented record of the water dates to 1892, so the water is 1 800 years old.

“It is the best quality water you can drink. This affects the quality of the wine,” he says.

Gericke says water is a defining factor at Neuras.

“After that comes heat, sun, wind, and unpredictability. Nothing here follows a set pattern. You can’t farm on autopilot.”

Van Vuuren says a recent study has found that expanding the vineyards would strain the underground water. Instead, the estate plans to follow the example of Namibia’s San culture and its harmonious relationship with nature based on one principle: Do not deplete or destroy.

The grapes are hand-harvested at dawn to avoid the heat, and production remains intentionally small to preserve quality, he says.

Conservation and economic sustainability are intertwined, with wine sales funding animal rehabilitation and release programmes at Neuras.

“Neuras is not just a winery, it is a 14 500-hectare conservation reserve. Every bottle supports the N/a’an ku sê Foundation’s work -- from large carnivore research to rehabilitation projects and community programmes. The natural springs we rely on also support wildlife and maintain the ecosystem,” Gericke says.

For van Vuuren, success is about much more than

If you could fold a piece of paper 42 times, it would reach the Moon

– though in reality, most people can’t get past 12 folds.



In conversation with conservationist Rudie van Vuuren.

crafting award-winning wine. His vision extends into conservation, community upliftment, and creating a sustainable future for both people and wildlife.

He says the estate will continue producing about 12 000 bottles a year, and the vineyard is considering cultivating a Pinotage wine, a red grape renowned for its hardiness and lower water demand.

Core Achievements

Van Vuuren defines success as two core achievements: the rehabilitation and release of many wild animals back into their natural habitats, and creating a sustainable funding model for the foundation's conservation work.

"Developing effective methods for wildlife rehabilitation has been a pioneering effort -- one for which no guidebook previously existed," he says.

Van Vuuren and his wife, Marlice, have in effect written the 'handbook' on the subject, he says.

The foundation connects with an international network of supporters and partners dedicated to making a difference.

The Right Connections

Simply put, the couple partners with high-net-worth individuals who are passionate about conservation in Africa and improving the lives of marginalised communities in Africa.

Van Vuuren says this approach was born of necessity.

Initially, he found the world of fundraising daunting.

"The first time I wrote a grant proposal, I thought it was pointless. I don't enjoy begging for money."

Over time, they developed an innovative business model, supported by international partners, that has provided the foundation with financial independence. In 2026, they expect to invest N\$30 million into their projects, fully funded by the organisation's own operations, Van Vuuren says.

How it Began

It all began with N/a'an ku sê Lodge near the airport more than two decades ago.

Originally created as a base to support Namibia's injured wildlife and as a clinic for Namibia's San people, the lodge was the brainchild of the Van Vuurens and Dutch businessman Jan Verburg.



Registered as a charitable organisation, N/a'an ku sê's primary goal was to attract tourism revenue to fund vital community health services. Today, the lodge operates at a profit, with much of its income directed to the San clinic and several schools established by the organisation.

It remains the only registered charity lodge of its kind in Africa, Van Vuuren says.

Building on this model, other founders and partners went on to launch Neuras, focused on landscape conservation, and the Kanaan Desert Retreat south of Neuras, bordering the Namib Naukluft Park.

Further expansion included the Harnas project near Gobabis, and the TimBila Nature Reserve close to Omaruru, funded by Dutch-born partner Albert ten Brinke.

Van Vuuren says N/a'an ku sê and its affiliated projects have earned a reputation as trusted partners for conservation-focused investors seeking opportunities in Namibia.

Investors

Jan and Tineke Verburg of Dutch construction company De Vries en Verburg have been instrumental in N/a'an ku sê's projects. The Van Uden Group of the Netherlands has been a key partner in N/a'an ku sê's projects since 2014, while the Ten Brinke Group, a leading Dutch property developer, is a partner in the TimBila Nature Reserve.

Ton Puttman is a supporter of N/a'an ku sê's Harnas project. There are many other ventures with other donating parties, including a foundation in Germany.

The Van Vuuren family, remaining the key drivers

in the N/a'an ku sê Ecotourism Collection story, has also maintained a two-decade relationship with the Jolie-Pitt Foundation. The foundation, established by actors Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, is renowned for supporting humanitarian causes and wildlife conservation.

Van Vuuren says: "By managing Angelina Jolie's work in Namibia in an accountable, transparent way, we've built a strong reputation. That's important for anyone looking to invest in Africa -- they need trustworthy, reliable people on the ground."

He says 101 000 hectares of land are protected under the N/a'an ku sê umbrella.

"The more land we safeguard, the greater our conservation impact."

Van Vuuren says Dutch investor Albert ten Brinke probably summarised the sentiments behind the N/a'an ku sê empire best while celebrating his 60th birthday.

The prominent property developer, shortly after TimBila Nature Reserve which he helped fund was completed, said: "The experiences I have in Namibia -- especially working in conservation and helping to mitigate elephant and lion conflict -- are priceless. Those returns you cannot buy with money."

True Wealth

For van Vuuren, true wealth is measured not by possessions but by impact.

"If you're looking to invest in Namibia solely for profit, I'm not your guy. But if you want returns money can't buy, I'm the right person for you." 🐾

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BellaTiny and Gypsy Wagon

How BellaTiny, a nature-loving escape, brought a global movement to Namibia.

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



Step inside the first Tiny Houses on Wheels in Namibia — a very special, romantic little getaway for nature lovers... and for those who love living big in a tiny house.

Sybillie Rueckleben is the owner of BellaTiny, and her husband Uwe designed it:

“Ours is the first Tiny House on Wheels in Namibia. The Tiny House movement is very popular in Australia, New Zealand and America, and is becoming more popular in Europe and, nowadays, South Africa, all committed to a minimalistic and environmentally friendly lifestyle.”

Sybillie explained how it all began: “We wanted to share our beautiful 500 ha bushland property with nature-loving people, so we decided to design our own Tiny House and rent it out to tourists.” She grins, “It wasn’t all that easy attending to all the detail in this restricted space, as we had to comply with the Roads Authority regulations in order to have it roadworthy. Luckily, Uwe is an architect, and we could do the design ourselves, but when we began approaching various companies in Windhoek to build it for us, they struggled to cope with the complexity of it... so we built it ourselves with the help of a few specialised builders.”

BellaTiny was rented out for the first time in November 2023: “From day one, our BellaTiny House was popular. It seems many people really love the concept of ‘living big in a

tiny house’. Many appreciate that one is completely remote, surrounded by nature and wildlife, without other people around. At the same time, it’s very close to Windhoek (45 minutes) and the airport (20 minutes), which makes it popular with overseas guests as well as many locals.”

And then came the Gypsy Wagon, says Sybillie: “Due to the increasing demand by families with three or four people, we decided to add the little Gypsy Wagon a year later.” Recently, on the same premises, two kilometres away, they built a private luxury camping site — also rented out to a single party at a time.

Although the Tiny House is self-catering accommodation, the Ruecklebens provide a well-filled grocery and beverage ‘shop’ inside the house, which is very convenient for visitors.

Sybillie stresses: “BellaTiny is not a big lodge or huge tourist business; it’s just a small, very special and romantic getaway for nature-loving people.”

Reviews on all travel platforms are close to 10 out of 10 for, well, everything... and reviewers love the attention to detail, from a fully stocked fridge (items to purchase) to handmade soaps, yoga mats and games. The outdoor bath with fairy lights is a particularly popular feature. And they love Sybillie as the host.

Think big... go tiny. 🌀

Bookings are through: [booking.com](https://www.booking.com); [airbnb.co.za](https://www.airbnb.co.za); or [lekkaslaap.co.za](https://www.lekkaslaap.co.za)

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The New Art Map to Windhoek

A walkable gateway to Namibian art, exploring the cultural heart of Windhoek, one gallery at a time.

words and photographs by Laschandre Coetzee

Windhoek is a compact capital with a surprising cultural breadth. Between official institutions, intimate galleries and lively cultural centres, the city's art scene is a revealing way to understand Namibia's past, present and creative future.

This January, a new printed Windhoek Art Map will make it easier for visitors to navigate these experiences — whether you prefer a gentle walk between museums or a short drive to discover independent studios and craft hubs, this map will be your guide to another layer of the city.

At the heart of the map is a remarkably walkable cluster of four destinations that together give a strong introduction to Namibian art. The National Art Gallery of Namibia (NAGN) anchors this circuit with its permanent collection and rotating exhibitions that trace national histories and local stories. A short stroll away, the Namibian Arts Association (NAA) provides archival context and a programme of shows that celebrate local artists and cultural heritage. Nearby, the Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre (FNCC) opens a window onto intercultural exchange with its exhibitions, film screenings and concerts. Rounding out the cluster is The Project Room, a contemporary platform founded in 2016 that champions both emerging and established Namibian artists through rigorous curatorial projects and collaborative events.

Together, these four sites form a friendly, walkable introduction to the capital's artistic life — perfect for travellers who want to stretch their legs and fill a morning or afternoon with meaningful encounters.

Beyond the walkable core, Windhoek's creative map fans out to include a broader network of spaces accessible by a short drive. Bellhaus Atelier & Galerie, tucked in the historic Grüner Kranz complex on Bell Street, invites visitors to linger among sculpture, painting and mixed media in a quietly restorative setting. StArt Art Gallery, which stages many shows at the cosy The Sweet Side of Thingz café on Independence Avenue and maintains a storeroom by appointment, brings a research-driven, critically engaged programme to town. The Namibia Craft Centre offers a lively marketplace for handmade craft — an ideal stop for collectors and anyone looking for a tangible memory of the trip — while the Omba Gallery within the centre presents curated exhibitions of contemporary practice.



What makes this map more than a list of addresses is its practical design for different kinds of visitors. Want a morning of wandering through inspired spaces? Stick to the walkable quartet. Interested in a deeper dive that includes studio visits and craft shopping? Then plan to incorporate the wider spaces. Each entry includes opening times, contact details and a short description so you know what to expect before you arrive.

The Windhoek Art Map is also a small celebration of collaboration. While Namibia has a small arts industry, it is one known for its collaborative and intimate approach. The map will be available from the end of January at participating venues, select hotels and tourist hubs across the city — perfect for travellers arriving with a few spare hours or a full day to explore.

Windhoek's art scene rewards curiosity. Whether you choose to wander between the National Art Gallery and The Project Room, spend a reflective hour at Bellhaus, or browse handcrafted treasures at the Craft Centre, the city's cultural offerings reveal different facets of Namibia's story: its artistic traditions, contemporary experiments and the conversations artists are having right now. The printed Windhoek Art Map is your companion to those conversations — a handy, printed invitation to see the city with new eyes.

Pick up a copy at the end of January, then step out and discover Windhoek... one gallery, one street and one encounter at a time. 🌀

The Last Word

words by Chris Coetzee



I have a troubled mind this month. The kind that stands in the kitchen, holding a sausage, and asks questions like: “Who made you...?”

For years, I blamed capitalism. I said it would be the downfall of the middle- and lower-income household.

But my view has shifted to a far more uncomfortable truth.

It’s not capitalism. It’s you. And it’s me.

It begins with a simple instinct: convenience.

The consumer no longer wishes to hunt. No.

It wants one place to gather all its supplies.

One den. One nest. One mega-mall.

Then it demands variety. Endless variety.

Forty-seven kinds of tomato sauce.

Ninety-three sausages pretending to be boerewors.

Walk into any grocery store and look at the sausage section. So many options. Endless choice. Freedom, they call it. Most of today’s boerewors is not food. It is a consumer experiment. They have names like: “Oupa se Geheim” and “Mamma se Trots.”

They taste like regret. Rebranding should be “Mother-in-Law” boerewors.

Ten minutes away is far too far for these shopping experiences. We want it four minutes away. By car. Preferably downhill.

The effect is so profound we now have three giant malls in a city that could comfortably host one big braai.

The cost of this “luxury” is passed straight to the consumer. That means: you. With a loyalty card.

Which brings me to this month’s Michelangelo Magazine Approved Destination.

In the capital of Namibia, at Academia Fuel Station, there is a butcher called BeefCor.

There you will find boerewors that is not just edible. It is memorable.

They did something radical. They offer only one kind. No options. No confusion. No regret. Because they understand something we have forgotten: life is too short for bad decisions.

So, here’s my advice: while you’re at it, fill up your car, walk into the Quick Shop, buy the garlic bread and some Capricorn Sweets’ chocolate-coated peanuts (because what I’m eating right now tastes like one of my better life decisions), and then go do what Stef Bos, the poet-songwriter - never short of inconvenient truths - already tried to tell you: “Dis tijd om te gaan leve.”

Which, of course, you will forget the moment you have put down this magazine, standing in your kitchen, holding a sausage, asking questions again. 🌀



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