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Celebrating Our Journey, Embracing Our Future

A festive message from the President: honouring our past, cherishing our present, and inspiring a brighter tomorrow



Dear Reader

The Festive season is a time for serenity, joy and fellowship with family and friends. It is also a season of sharing laughter and life with our beloved ones, as well as gifting those who are less fortunate with what we have been blessed throughout the year 2024.



His Excellency
Dr. Nangolo Mbumba,
President of the
Republic of Namibia

As a country, we had gone through a lot this year: without warning we were compelled to say farewell to our beloved President Dr. Hage G. Geingob; A new leadership was constituted, guiding us through an emotional moment in our nation's history.

Now, as we find ourselves at the doorstep of the Festive season, I pause and take a moment to reflect on the journey we have traverse as a nation. With much anticipation many of us are looking forward to the unfolding of our personal prospects and the collective future of our great nation.

Michelangelo

—FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK—



Some of us, including myself will be reminiscing on the year that was and the events which have shaped our lives and the trajectory of our country in ways not envisaged previously. Others, including me will be reflecting on the impacts of these events and what the future hold for us and for the Land of the Brave. The Namibia of March 21, 2025 will be vastly different from the Namibia of March 21, 1990.

With the passing of each year, with each Christmas and New Year, Namibia is transforming from its terrible political past when the game of “rolling stones” we played, where I grew up was the mainstay together with the love songs of Percy Sledge and the revolutionary melodies of Bob Marley; into a united nation of the Brave Young Warriors.

If like myself, you are of the age where you can recall our “rolling stones” era, then you are a living testament to Namibia’s glorious history of self-determination.

Your sacrifices have set foundations of democracy, peace, stability, justice and unity of our nation, and for that, we remain forever grateful.

For this Festive Season, whether your items are ticked off on Santa Claus’ list or not, like me, the responsibility to guide and protect our beloved country still rests with all of us. I trust that you will continue to be a responsible

citizen or even a visitor and treat each other with utmost hospitality to continue building the Namibian House, where all belong, and no one feels left out.

To all those who have noticed that your knees don’t move quite well as they used to be, and the grey silver linings have replaced the hair which

used to be all black or brown, and hence nostalgia and quietness have become your permanent companions, I want to thank you for your commitment to Namibia and her people. You have given your all and your very best. Your legacy will remain immortalized in the annals of Namibian history.

And to those born in the era of freedom, electricity and telecommunications, and rap and hip hop tunes, in the day of the Young Brave Warriors, I ask that you too, take care of yourselves and our country. The future is Youth, and I have faith that you will guide, push and direct Namibia towards even greater heights.

I wish you all a Blessed Christmas. Please travel safely and have fun responsibly.

Merry Christmas



Empowering Namibia's Youth for a Sustainable Future



Brian Jones

Brian Jones

Environment and
Development consultant

Recovering from open heart surgery to repair a dodgy valve in your late 60s, gives you time to reflect on both the past and the future. Time to think about what you have achieved after 36 years working in conservation in Namibia, what has been accomplished, but also what still needs to be done and who is going to take conservation forward in the future.

It is the last month for the calendar year 2024 and my mind goes back to a meeting one hot dry, dusty afternoon on the outskirts of Opuwo in Kunene Region. As part of a project evaluation, I have been asked to meet a group of young people who have formed the Otjinderese Youth Group. The meeting takes place at that time after lunch when the eyes want to close and the body is seeking something soft to lie on for a brief escape from the heat. However, I was soon jerked out of my sleepy state as eight young men and women started giving presentations on their conservation projects.

I was thoroughly invigorated by their explanations of how they were providing environmental education, awareness on environmental challenges and were addressing soil degradation within their community. Members of the group were also capturing data on various aspects of biodiversity in their area on the SMART phone app provided by WWF Namibia. They were educating other members of the local youth on income generating activities such as brick making from river sand in a sustainable way. They explained that their vision is to improve the livelihoods of the youth linked to conservation. And they

“If we kill all the wild animals, our children won’t see them”

were doing all this without payment! This group was fortunate as they had good support from WWF Namibia and the Namibian NGO, Integrated Rural development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC).

My thoughts then turned to another youth group I interviewed for the same project evaluation. This time I was at Omega in the Bwabwata National Park with eight Khwe San members of the local youth. They had some support from the Ministry of Youth, Sport and National Service, but were not formally organized. They explained how they wanted to be involved in conservation but lacked the means. Their Khwe elders had lived with the wildlife in the past and looked after it, they did not burn unnecessarily or go poaching or cut down the trees. “If we kill all the wild animals, our children won’t see them”.

My experience shows that there are many young people like those described above who want to be involved in conservation as well as wanting to help their communities develop. They have the energy, the enthusiasm and the willingness to learn. They just need the right kind of support to help kick start some activities.

The Namibian NGOs IRDNC, the Namibia Development Trust and the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust, with WWF Namibia have been supporting the Youth in Conservation Network across large parts of Namibia. The aim is to foster a stronger connection with the environment and to encourage youth (particularly out of school and unemployed youth) to realize that they have a role to play in environmental protection and that

there is value in this for them and their communities. A major achievement has been 38 youth across 27 communal conservancies contributing 3 396 sightings of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and bats through the biodiversity phone app.

In addition, support is needed to help develop individual conservation leaders. For example, since 2017 the Donald Hamer Foundation has channeled funds through WWF Namibia to train young enthusiastic Namibian graduates to become future leaders in the Community Based Natural Resource Management sector. These 25 interns have found jobs in NGOs, the private sector, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, while others pursued further studies.

These are some examples of the support already being given to Namibia's youth to ensure they take conservation and community development into the future, but much more is needed to involve more young people across the whole country to ensure that biodiversity conservation and climate change are addressed at national and local level. It's a cliché, that the youth are our future, but it remains quite true! We all age and need repairs, calendar years end and our journeys end, but the commitment to conservation should continue through the generations, so we must equip the youth to take over when we have to retire from the fray. With over 1 million species on the brink of extinction, the youth must rise—for without their commitment to conservation, the human heartbeat itself may fall silent. ❖



ON THE COVER:

Dear Diary...

A monthly column by Sandra Baumeister to spark your wanderlust and share the stunning beauty and wonder of the places she's had the privilege to discover.

(See page 19 for the full story)

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



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Namibian artist Stephané Edith Conradie's work traverses the realms of material culture, social identity, and historical memory.



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Luxury comes in many different shades, no more so than when stepping off that planet into this one, where wildlife, an extraordinary landscape, good living and supreme comfort take centre stage.

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Chris Coetzee reflects on DIY disasters, global praise, and the unsung heroes shaping



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MINDFULLY NAMIBIA

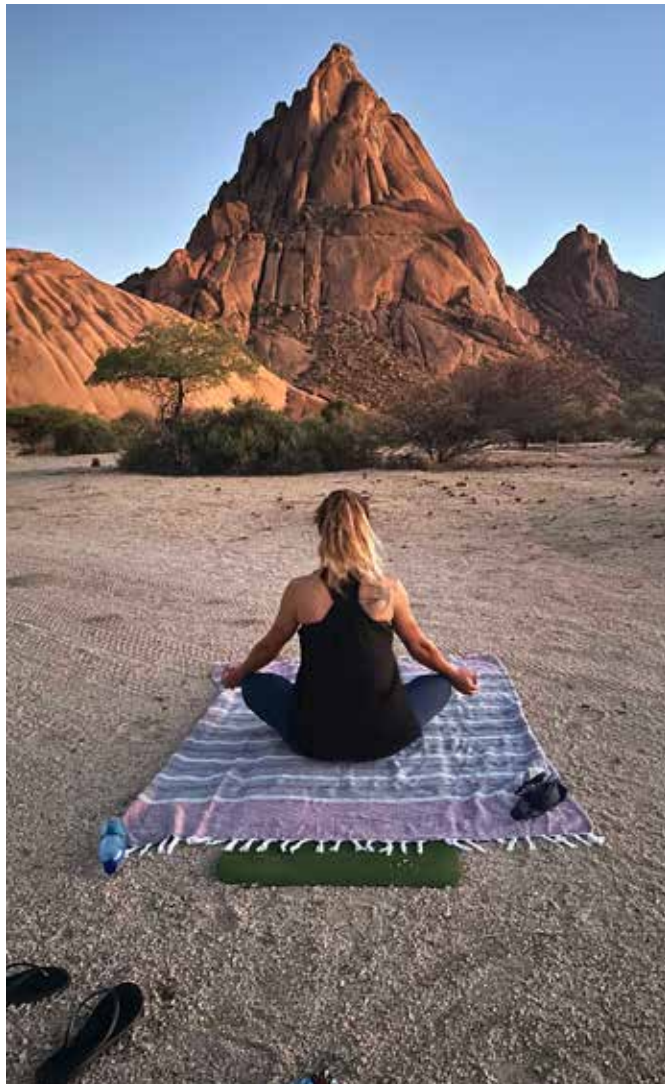


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*Ten exhilarating days of yoga, hiking and safari in Namibia
— it's the perfect combination of adventure and mindfulness.*

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs supplied



Is there a better way to immerse yourself in nature, than on foot? Perhaps. Try combining it with twice-daily yoga sessions, and you will experience everything Namibian in Technicolour. It's the ultimate way to feel all the feelings.

Here are the broad strokes of the tour: A moderate 3-day hike in the NamibRand Nature Reserve; explore the highlights of Sossusvlei in the Namib Naukluft Park; climb Big Daddy dune which is about 325m high, admiring Deadvlei from above; adventurous activities along the Skeleton Coast; hike the Spitzkoppe's granite peaks in search of Bushman engravings; 2 days of safari in Etosha National Park; morning and evening yoga sessions.

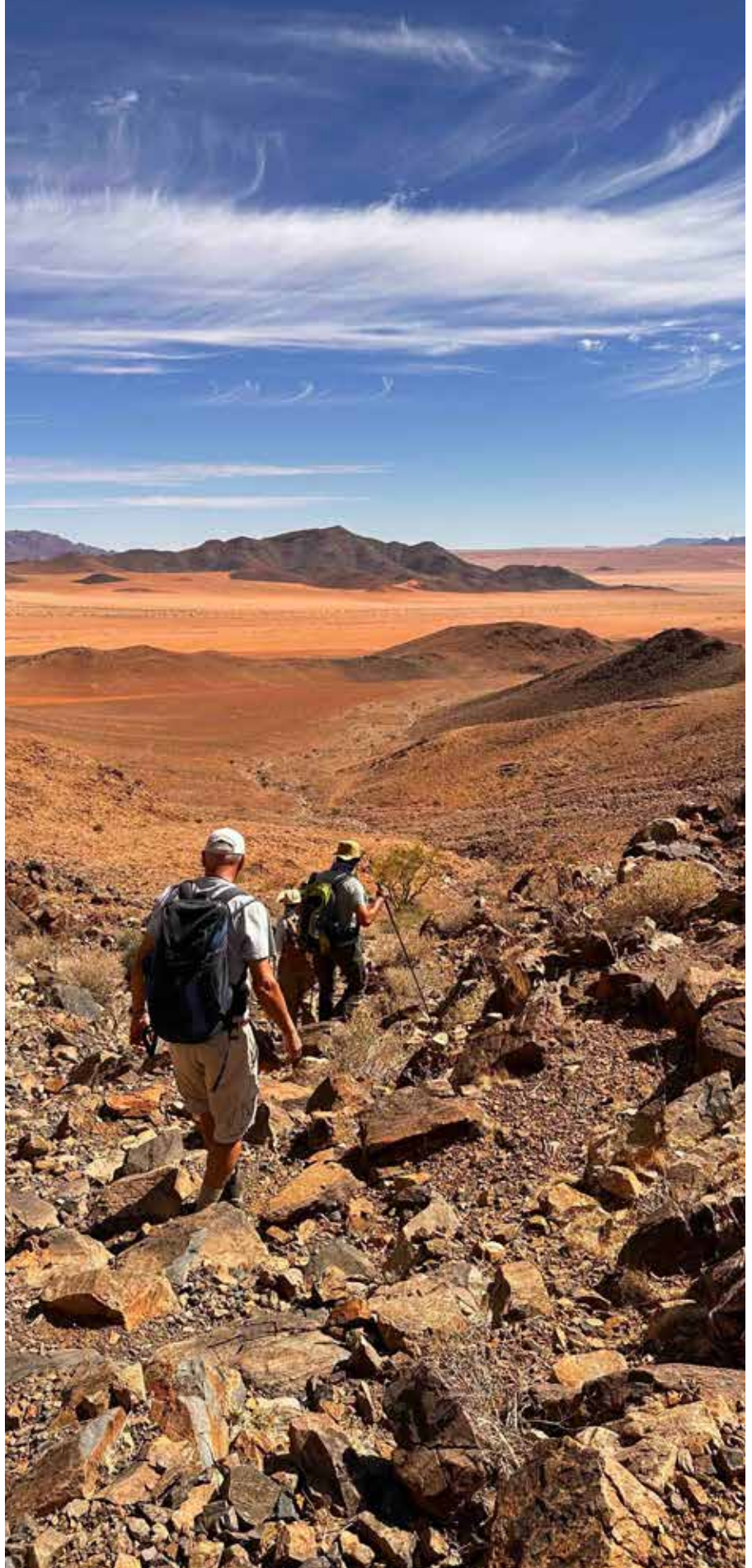
Your journey begins in Windhoek; Day 2 & 3 is in NamibRand Nature Reserve; Day 4 is Namib Naukluft Park (Sossusvlei/Deadvlei/Sesriem Canyon); Day 5 & 6 Swakopmund; Day 7 Spitzkoppe; Days 8 & 9 Etosha National Park; Day 10 Return to Windhoek.

So, who's leading this tour? Marcel Vosloo – a Namibian yoga teacher and professional guide – is the founder of Namaste Yoga Safari, a wellness travel company specialising in yoga holidays in some of the greatest safari destinations in Africa since 2016. She brings years of travel expertise, coupled with a profound love for adventure, nature, and mindfulness: “My focus is on personal growth and an unforgettable adventure in a non-competitive environment.” Beyond the thrill of wildlife sightings, a yoga safari invites you to discover the serenity and balance found when you embrace the present moment amid the splendour of the wild. It allows you to savour every moment and connect deeply with the environment, leaving you with lasting memories, personal growth, and a deeper appreciation for the beauty of the world around you.

When you walk through Namibia, you will discover many secrets of the Namib that cannot be experienced when driving and you will get to feel different aspects of the desert – from mountainous terrain to sandy dunes. Relax with a sundowner and enjoy a three-course dinner before falling asleep under the stars.



“Immerse yourself in the beauty of Africa’s wildlife and nature, and let yoga complement your journey.”



According to a study in Social Science & Medicine, living almost 2 years longer can be related to reading 30 minutes daily.



Accommodation

For most locations, accommodation is in lodges, all with exquisite natural surroundings.

At the Tok Tokkie Trail, it is sleeping on stretchers for two nights – sleeping under the stars is unforgettable. If the sky is clear and moonless, you will quickly understand why NamibRand Nature Reserve is one of the few International Dark Sky Reserves in the world.

Yoga sessions

All yoga sessions are held out in nature among the most magnificent scenery, sunsets and sunrises. Expect a mixture of yin, slow flows, vinyasa flows, hatha inspired, guided and silent meditation sessions + various breathing techniques.

Spaces are limited to 4 guests on this tour, for the perfect experience in both yoga and hiking. There are other tours of varying lengths – speak to Marcel. 🍷

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DEAR DIARY...

—A MONTHLY COLUMN BY SANDRA BAUMEISTER—

A Personal Moment of Peace in the Namib Desert



I WANT TO SHARE A DEEPLY PERSONAL MOMENT—one of peace, quiet, and grounding—experienced in the Namib Desert, the oldest desert in the world.

When I first moved to Namibia, it was the incredible wildlife and vibrant cultures that drew me in. But it wasn't until later, when I journeyed south into the heart of the Namib Desert, that I truly felt the soul of this country. Standing there, surrounded by the largest dunes on Earth, towering up to 300 meters, I felt a sense of awe I hadn't expected. The endless stretch of rich orange sand felt otherworldly, the dunes rising like waves of an ancient ocean. They seemed to call to me—to climb them, to lose myself in their vastness.

But the desert has its way of humbling you. The heat was intense, the sand too hot to touch, and I quickly realized this was a place of immense power. Yet, even in its harshness, the Namib had a beauty that was hard to describe—just sand, dunes, and the occasional lone tree, standing quietly against the backdrop of an infinite expanse. It was a landscape that made me feel both small and connected to something much bigger.

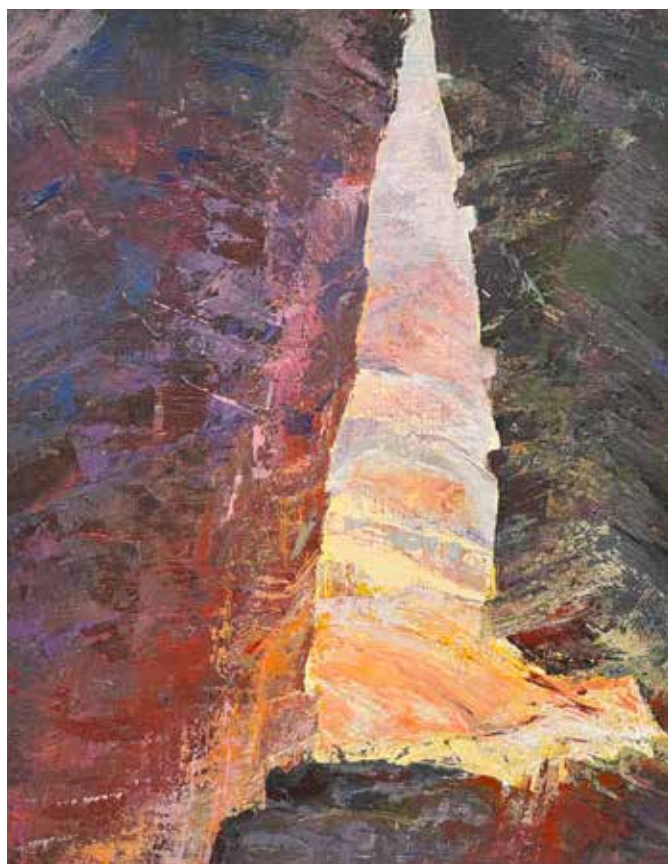
What surprised me most was not just the landscape, but

the sky. As the sun set, and the day's heat faded, the Namib Desert transformed. I lay in the warm sand, watching as the night took over, and soon, the stars began to appear—one by one, until the entire sky was a glittering canvas. I have never seen a sky so dark, nor stars so bright. It felt magical, like I had been transported to another world, far away from everything.

Sitting there, wrapped in the silence of the desert, I felt a deep calm wash over me. In that moment, the worries and noise of everyday life melted away. The vastness of the Namib reminded me of the simplicity and beauty of just being present. It grounded me in a way I had not expected, giving me a sense of peace I did not even know I needed.

That night, under the stars, I found clarity. I found a stillness that recharged me, giving me the strength and perspective to return to the world and its challenges with a renewed sense of purpose. Sometimes, we need those quiet moments, away from the noise, to reconnect with ourselves—and for me, the Namib Desert gave me that gift.

It is a place I will always carry with me. A place that helped me find peace, and a deeper connection to both the land and to myself. 🍷



Clockwise from top left:
Crevice by Barbara Pirron; *Summer Joy* by
 Axel Schäfer; *Petals & Pigments* by James Yates;
Sperrgebiet Relics by Alice van Jaarsveld.



The Earth can be encircled nine times with the wrapping paper used by human beings; nonetheless not half of us can cut it straight.

Nature's Pops of Colour

*If you are in need of a jolt of colour courtesy of nature,
pop into the Fine Art Gallery, and feel the feeling*

words and photographs Fine Art Gallery

This collection brings together the joy and energy that only nature's colours can evoke, with each artwork contributing to a larger story of the beauty and wonder found in the natural world. You are invited to wander through this visual journey and let these "Pops of Colour" spark joy and inspiration

"Nature's Pops of Colour" celebrates the lively hues and diverse beauty of the natural world. This unique collection presents a range of works, each offering a fresh perspective on nature's most colourful moments and inspiring forms.

A Symbol of Renewal: The Arum Lily

At the heart of this exhibition is a remarkable centerpiece: a stunning portrayal of elegant arum lilies. This featured work symbolizes the essence of "Nature's Pops of Colour," with its refined, trumpet-shaped blooms embodying purity, elegance, and renewal. The arum lily, with its graceful form and soft, radiant tones, serves as a powerful reminder of nature's ability to inspire transformation and celebrate life's most serene moments.

A Kaleidoscope of Nature's Palette

- **Expansive Landscapes:** Wander through sweeping vistas and serene scenes that bring the freedom and beauty of nature to life.
- **Abstract Bursts of Colour:** Unique expressions that play with texture, movement, and bold palettes to evoke the energy and essence of nature.

Each artwork in this collection contributes to a larger story of the beauty and wonder found in the natural world. Come and take a stroll. ❖



Elephant Guards and more

Since 2003, Elephant-Human Relations Aid (EHRA) has helped build peaceful relationships between free-roaming desert elephants and local communities in Namibia. It is all about innovative strategies, a new education centre, Elephant Guards and volunteers

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs supplied



Increasingly – particularly in Africa - there's ongoing conflict between communities and wildlife over shared land and resources. With its ongoing drought, Namibia is no exception. Elephants, livestock and humans share the same waterpoints, which not only sparks conflict, but also results in human and elephant fatalities. EHRA's mission is to implement practical solutions that help combat that conflict, and thereby secure a future for Namibia's desert elephants. They do this through building protective walls around waterpoints, educating locals on conflict mitigation tactics and continuous monitoring of the different elephant herds.

Elephant Guards

EHRA launched their educational PEACE Project in 2009. Efforts began with a modest team of two to three people who, despite their dedication, were limited in reach and effectiveness. These team members traveled from distant regions, which meant high transportation

costs, to conduct elephant safety workshops with local communities. At most, around 200 people annually were trained in those early years, with expenses often outpacing impact.

By the end of 2019, the vital question was asked: How to achieve maximum impact with minimal funding? The solution was to create a locally stationed team that could work more efficiently and reach a broader audience. Thus, the Elephant Guard Program was born in response to the ever-present need for community education on safe coexistence with elephants.

Since 2023, the team has grown to include four full-time Elephant Guards plus two stand-by Guards stationed across three key regions: Sorris Sorris Conservancy, Omatjete, and Fransfontein.

Operating across over 6,000 square kilometers, these Guards work tirelessly to mitigate the impact of human-elephant conflict, becoming a crucial part of EHRA's conservation strategy. Thanks to their efforts, EHRA's



reach has expanded exponentially. In 2023 alone, the Guards educated 2,307 people on peaceful coexistence with elephants, and in 2024 they have already reached over 2,500 community members—a remarkable increase from earlier efforts.

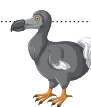
The work of an Elephant Guard is multi-dimensional. Guards provide elephant safety training, assist EHRA's conservation projects, and act as eyes and ears in the field. Their duties also include night watches and homestead guarding services when elephants roam nearby, a task made more effective by EHRA's Early Warning system. This system uses geofencing and collared elephants to alert communities, allowing the Guards to act before conflicts arise.

The Guards are trusted figures in their communities, serving as first responders for elephant-related emergencies. Often, residents contact them in the middle of the night when elephants are dangerously close to homes. One such instance involved a late-night call to

Taiwin, the Head Elephant Guard in Sorris Sorris. A man, terrified as elephants pulled at pipes near his house, turned to Taiwin for guidance. After a quick exchange, Taiwin calmly advised the man to make some noise by tipping over a table. The tactic worked, and the elephants departed, leaving the man safe and relieved.

In another incident, three young men encountered a herd of elephants on their way home. Just as they were about to flee, one of them remembered advice from Taiwin: to remain calm and seek higher ground instead. By doing so, they avoided running directly into the herd, possibly saving their lives.

These stories underscore the importance of the Elephant Guard Program. With plans to expand the program further, EHRA is committed to ensuring that more communities gain access to essential skills for safe elephant interactions—an investment that benefits both people and elephants in Namibia.



Human operations have caused 869 species to extinction during the last 500 years.



New Elephant Education Centre

Guided tours, tea, cake, generous spaces for students and more...plus a whole lot of knowledge on the complexities of elephant-human conflict, and what can be – and is being – done. Education is critical.

For communities in Northern Erongo and Southern Kunene, living alongside free-roaming elephants can be challenging. The Elephant Education Centre is located just 50km from Uis in Tsaaurab Valley, and is the latest step in the mission to promote peaceful coexistence between elephants and people.

As part of EHRA's PEACE Project, the centre provides a unique educational experience focused on reducing human-wildlife conflict and fostering understanding. The PEACE Project helps local communities, including schools, conservancy game guards, elephant guards, and field guides, to learn about elephant behaviour and how to live safely with their wild neighbours.

The support of NUII, WildArk and AGA has been critical in providing essential funding for the new centre and helping the project stay on track.



The Joy of Volunteering

Volunteering with EHRA is about providing immediate and practical support to communities through the construction of protection walls around waterpoints, while learning and benefitting wildlife conservation. EHRA's Elephant Wildlife Volunteer Project requires a minimum of two weeks' commitment and the project is split into two parts, namely, 'Build Week' and 'Patrol Week'. **Your impact as a volunteer...**

- Fight the eradication of the free-roaming desert elephant population in Namibia.
- Find practical solutions to combat elephant-human conflict that exists due to a battle for resources.
- Experience hands-on conservation by building walls and structures designed to allow elephants to access waterpoints without damaging them.
- Partake in elephant tracking, monitoring and documenting important updates to their behavioural and movement patterns.
- Create a difference in the lives of local communities and Namibia's free-roaming desert elephants. ❀

Adventure is Calling!

Discover the Beauty of Your Own Country Today!

Are you ready for an unforgettable journey without leaving your homeland? The Namibia Tourism Board invites you to explore the breathtaking landscapes, rich cultures, and unique experiences that await you in Namibia. This land of contrasts features the vast Namib Desert, rugged mountains, and wildlife roaming in pristine national parks.

Why travel far when you can experience the wonders of Etosha National Park, one of Africa's premier wildlife destinations? Witness impressive elephants, graceful giraffes, and elusive big cats in their natural habitat. With various campsites and lodges, you can immerse yourself in the wild while enjoying home comforts. Don't forget your camera every moment is picture-perfect!

Traveling locally also means connecting with the diverse cultures that make Namibia unique. Visit the Himba communities in the Kunene Region to learn about their traditional way of life and vibrant customs. Engage with the San people to discover their ancient knowledge of the land, enriching your understanding while supporting local communities.

For adventure seekers, Namibia offers thrilling activities. Try sandboarding down the towering dunes of Swakopmund or take a hot air balloon ride over the Namib Desert at sunrise. Kayaking along the Zambezi River provides a unique perspective of stunning landscapes and wildlife.

By choosing to travel within your, you support local businesses and contribute to the economy, helping preserve our natural and cultural heritage.

The Namibia Tourism Board encourages you to plan your next getaway within our beautiful country. Adventure is calling rediscover Namibia and create lasting memories.

Travel local, explore more, and let the wonders of your own backyard inspire you!

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NGEPI

...in a mokoro

Ngepi Camp in Namibia is legendary for many reasons... one of them being their trips on the Okavango, in a dug-out canoe or mokoro, where you'll relish a taste of traditional Kavango life

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



You'll book in at Ngepi Camp for a number of reasons, but no matter whether you're a fisherman, adventurer or escapee from wherever, you're guaranteed a few things: a significant focus on sustainability, authenticity and community, a deep concern for the environment...and a giant concern for your enjoyment.

Which accommodation have you chosen? All the accommodation is charming, well-considered in terms of tranquillity, strong on sustainability and nature coming first. Each accommodation type has its own unique charm.

So, which is it? One of the 20 campsites – riverside or bush; one of three overland sites, or perhaps, the bush

huts or one of the 14 shady treehouses? The Swirl is the luxury Tree House. As with all the Tree Houses, The Swirl fits its tree structure naturally, not harming the tree during or after construction, and is also designed to see the sun rise between your toes when lying in bed. The Swirl has an amazing river view, king-size bed and a skylight shower like no other. It also has a small kitchenette with basic self-catering equipment for 2 guests.

Only renewable commercially grown SA pine wood and gum poles – as well as local reeds and thatching grass – have been used in the buildings' construction – no indigenous local trees are felled, as this would degrade the already threatened forests – these trees take 100's of years to grow to maturity.



In America around 40% of their lakes are unfit for fishing, aquatic life, or swimming, due to pollution.



There is no better way to explore the Okavango Delta than on a mokoro...said everybody always. You're approaching wildlife unobtrusively, so you can find hippos in the reeds or elephants on the banks. Nothing to be afraid of either – the Ngepi guides (all of whom grew up in the area) are very experienced and respectful of the surrounding wildlife. It's also a wonderful way to see life from the perspective of locals who have used these boats for hundreds of years, mainly for fishing, their main food source.

Ngepi's mokoros are made of fibreglass as opposed to the original beautiful old indigenous trees...which now stay in the ground, as they should.

This is paradise for birders...particularly as you're not approaching with a noisy engine. The little islands, reed beds and riverbanks are filled with birdlife...from Pied

Kingfishers to Little Bitterns to Squacco Herons. Your bird list will be in seventh heaven.

Half-way through the two-hour long paddle, you're likely to beach on a white sandy island for sundowners. Your guides will share their local knowledge and fascinating legends...such as the river dragon or Dikongoro. The Dikongoro is said to live in a big tunnel dug into the riverbed and, in the past, has caused the demise of many a fisherman!

Where is Ngepi? It's on the B8 road at Divundu (on the western side of the Okavango River at the bridge). You'll turn south on Mohembo Border Post Road (towards Botswana) for 10km, then turn left at the Ngepi sign for a further 4km on 2WD road. 🍷



The Lifeline of a Forgotten Community

The Story of the N/a'an ku sê Lifeline Clinic



THE AIR IS THICK WITH THE DRY HEAT of Namibia's Omaheke Region, and dust rises in soft swirls as a crowd gathers under the shade of a lone tree. A woman sits cross-legged on the ground, her infant cradled in her arms, the baby's frail chest rising and falling with shallow, laboured breaths. Her eyes are filled with quiet desperation. It's a scene that Marlice van Vuuren has witnessed too many times – a vivid reminder of the fragility of life in this forgotten corner of the world.

Marlice kneels beside the mother, her hands gentle but purposeful as she checks the baby's condition. The memory of another child flashes in her mind – the one who didn't survive. That baby had been carried to her, desperate and gasping for life, but help had come too late. It was that moment, years ago, that changed everything.

The death of that baby ignited a spark in Marlice and her doctor husband, Rudie, one that would lead them to establish the N/a'an ku sê Lifeline Clinic. "The heavens protect us," that's what the name means, taken from the San language to honour the people Marlice had grown up alongside on her family farm. For years, she had watched them endure the kind of hardships that would break most others. But the San had endured, and now, with the clinic, Marlice and Rudie were determined to give them the care and dignity they deserved.

From its humble beginnings in 2003, the Lifeline Clinic has become just that, a lifeline for thousands. Situated in the impoverished village of Epukiro, it serves more than 5,000 patients every year, most of them San, and more than 40% of them children. The clinic offers not just medical care but also hope and compassion in a region where these have been in short supply.

Every week, its staff embark on long, gruelling journeys into the hinterlands, travelling over 2,000 kilometres a month to reach patients in remote communities. These outreach sessions are vital, especially for treating tuberculosis, a disease that ravages the San population at rates far higher than

the national average. Patients like Jan, a young boy diagnosed with TB, find not only treatment at the clinic but also the nourishment and care that rebuild shattered bodies and spirits.

Back at the clinic, the work never stops. Two days a week, the courtyard fills with the rich aroma of a protein-packed stew as families gather for the clinic's feeding program. Here, children and adults alike receive what might be their only proper meal of the week. A chance to combat malnutrition and rebuild their strength. For babies who have lost their mothers, formula milk becomes a lifeline, offering a chance to survive and thrive.

The clinic's agricultural project, started in 2021, adds another layer of hope. Fresh produce – tomatoes, melons, cucumbers, and more – now grows in abundance on the clinic grounds. The crops not only provide essential vitamins to the community but also offer San individuals the chance to learn new skills and reclaim some measure of self-reliance.

In every corner of the clinic's work is the unmistakable mark of people who care. People like Sister Anna, whose quiet strength and unrelenting compassion have made her a pillar of the community. Or Titus, whose severe arm condition is being treated in Windhoek with funds raised by the N/a'an ku sê Foundation. These stories are countless, woven into the fabric of what the clinic

represents – a second chance for those who might otherwise have none.

The N/a'an ku sê Lifeline Clinic isn't just a place of healing; it is a symbol of resilience, compassion, and hope. Through its work, the clinic reminds the world that even in the most forgotten places, lives matter. For those who wish to join this mission, the clinic offers an open hand – accepting donations, partnerships, and any support that ensures the heavens continue to protect the San people.





top: A recent aerial view of the !Karuhasse establishment showcases the vineyard and various venues available for guests to explore.

bottom left: The locally produced gin Petrichor.

right: Unexpectedly lush green vineyards flourish on Erf 817 in Stampriet, thanks to an underground water supply.

Beyond Stampriet

*Eat What You Produce and
Produce What You Eat*

*Stampriet in the Hardap region is more than just
a peaceful rural weekend getaway.*

words by Linda de Jager | photographs by Claudia Robson

The town, located 64 km north-east of Mariental, has many fine tourism establishments to choose from.

Among them is the Kalahari Farmhouse. And if you're looking for a handwoven carpet made from sheep's wool, consider visiting the Historical at the Mill Boutique Hotel.

The B1 highway leads visitors from Windhoek to Stampriet in just over three hours, covering a distance of 308.8 km.

The town is also home to the Roots project, combining community living with agriculture, focusing on mutual aid.

The Small Town That Could

Initially, I became interested in the Roots development under the umbrella of Jehenmar Trading Enterprises Pty Ltd (JHM) and filmed a short segment about the concept for Business Day TV (channel 412 on DStv).

This was part of a four-episode programme called 'Invest Namibia', created with the support of the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB).

Operating under the Roots trademark, the project includes plans for an agricultural college, retirement village, lifestyle village, and various business opportunities.



top right: A recent aerial view of the !Karuhas establishment showcases the vineyard and various venues available for guests to explore.
top left: Unique dishes are crafted by Chef Polla Thornburn.

The aim is to establish a mini-economy with the potential for international product exports and investment opportunities in agriculture and property development.

Several Roots products are already on the shelves of local shops – from fruits, vegetables and eggs to free-range chicken.

Several opportunities for investors remain.

A local school opened in January 2021, and an agricultural college became operational this year. It has 500 students and the option of remote learning.

For a small town, educational options at Stampriet are quite diverse.

Elnatan, an Afrikaans Christian private school, has been serving the Afrikaans-speaking community at the town since 1991.

This initiative was part of the vision of local leaders.

Principal Johan Adriaanse says 200 children are currently enrolled at the school.

A handful of visionary names remains deeply embedded in the Kalahari, leaving a legacy that continues to resonate through the sand dunes to this day. Names like Louis van

der Westhuizen, Boetie Harmse, Kobus Visagie, Charlie Schoem, Fanie Louw, Frikkie Strauss, and Hennie Harmse tell stories of grit, generosity, and a pioneering spirit that has forever shaped the community around them. These individuals didn't merely pass through; they made their mark, transforming dusty trails into paths of hope.

Moreover, initiatives like Roots are essential for the responsible and innovative use of underground resources, which can significantly enhance food production amidst Namibia's severe food insecurity.

The project was conceived by Dr. Johan Rieckert and embodies the motto "Eat what you produce, and produce what you eat".

This vision for Stampriet is simple and powerful, showcasing what small communities with access to underground water – an invaluable resource – can achieve.

NamWater suspending water from the Hardap Dam for irrigation purposes in November due to low water levels once again highlights the critical importance of abundant groundwater in areas like Stampriet.





(Photo credit: Linda de Jager)



Gin It Up!

Bokkie and Alta Thorburn, the founders of the !Kharuhase establishment at Stampriet, were among the first to adopt the Roots concept. They are also known for their construction business, K Neumayer Civil Contractors.

In 2019, they bought Erf 817 from the Roots farm project.

Today, !Kharuhase offers a restaurant, four exquisite stand-alone cottages, and four campsites – each with its own ablution block and outdoor braai facilities.

Additionally, the venue features a distillery and the unique Salt and Pepper wedding venue.

Initially, the Thornburn family team oversaw the tilling of two hectares of land for Chenin Blanc vineyards.

Soon after, the distillery produced its own gin, named Petrichor.

Polla Thornburn, the couple's son who also manages the establishment, enthusiastically explains that 'petrichor' refers to the smell of rain.

According to Wikipedia, petrichor is indeed the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil. The term originates from the Ancient Greek word 'petra', meaning 'rock', or 'petros', meaning 'stone', and 'ichor', the ethereal fluid that is said to be the blood of the gods in Greek mythology.

While Stampriet may seem an unlikely place to produce gin, the final product is already available at several lodges and shops.

The name !Kharuhase also tickles the imagination.

Prof. Wilfrid Haacke is an expert in the Khoekhoe language, which is spoken by both the Nama and Damara people. He says the phrase "!"kharu hâse" in Khoekhoe is adverbial and translates to "having passed (by/through) some other place", and should be pronounced in the correct tone.

Polla is also the chef at !Kharuhase's restaurant, which opened its doors in 2022. He studied at the Institute of Culinary Arts at Stellenbosch, one of South Africa's leading culinary schools.

He is supported by another local chef, Dewald Mouton and together the two ensure that the meals have a touch of class.

top: Polla Thornburn, the manager of !Kharuhase, proudly presents Petrichor, a gin produced in Stampriet.

bottom: The distillery that produced Petrichor gin.



*above left: the Salt and Pepper venue at !Karuhas.
above right: A joyful Janry en Ané du Toit celebrated their
wedding at the Salt and Pepper venue at !Karuhas.*

A Supermoon and Crimson Sands

During one of two visits to Stampriet in the past two months, I was strolling around the lodge area beneath a haunting supermoon, also known as a hunter's moon, on 17 October. This phenomenon got its name due to the visibility it would provide hunters.

I was happy to be in the Kalahari, where the pulsing heat felt more forgiving thanks to !Karuhas's swimming pool on a wooden deck. This is a romantic setting, but my thoughts were with a book I was reviewing at the time.

Jo Prins, Media 24's national book editor, asked me to review 'Crimson Sands' (available in Afrikaans as 'Rooisand'). Stampriet provided an evocative and relevant historical setting while reading the book.

The story spans from Namaland in what was then known as German South-West Africa to the Cape Colony between 1904 and 1922. The novel, written by Jeremy Veary, is an epic, panoramic tale of people hunting people.

It is told from the perspective of Dirk Aruseb, who joins the Bondelswarts community to fight the Schutztruppe (colonial troops). The story brings to life long-gone voices and narratives and many layers of history visitors can explore to deepen their understanding of Namibia.

Stampriet was established in 1898 as a trading post in German South West Africa. It was the site of numerous confrontations between German and Nama troops.

Nowadays, life is peaceful at the town.

While enjoying a glass of gin on the stoep, one can look down on the picturesque vegetable gardens, orchards, and various agricultural projects. Some plots grow potatoes, while others produce fodder – all thanks to the Roots initiative.

I walked into a local supermarket in search of ice cream when I stumbled upon a self-published book titled 'Gedagtes' by the late Connie Zondagh, a Stampriet local. It contains mostly poetry. This unexpected find gave me the chance to connect two books and explore some thoughts.



Consistent with a new preprint study, the levels of plastic in the human brain have increased by 50% since 2016.



(Photo credit: Linda de Jager)

above: At 93 years old, Aletta Witbooi is one of the oldest Khoekhoe-speaking residents in the Stampriet area.

'Gedagtes' features a picture of a camelthorn tree at a place called Hofmeyr, which was used as a hanging tree by the Schutztruppe. I find these fragments of history one encounters while travelling fascinating. Trees like this still stand as living reminders of the reality depicted in books like 'Crimson Sands'.

These trees are important, not only because there is often only an unmarked grave as memorial for those who lost their lives during that turbulent era, but also because they highlight how precious the peace and tranquility are for visitors passing through Stampriet and Namibia.

I want to avoid colouring my experience with the violent undertones of a book like 'Crimson Sands', although I recommend reading it.

I prefer to cherish the town's kind and friendly people, an unexpected walk through a lush vineyard in the Kalahari, the snow-white ice cream I enjoyed while listening to Lou Reed's 'Perfect Day', and the vibrant view of a crimson sunset over the Kalahari from !Kharuhase's stoep. ❧

Stampriet Fast Facts

Earlier Inhabitants

The African Nama people once lived near a spring in the area. Stamprietfontein was established as a trading post in 1898 in the then-German South West Africa. During the colonial period, this unassuming place was the site of various conflicts.

Incidents and Battles

An ambush near Stamprietfontein on a reconnaissance unit, led by lieutenant V Bollard-Bockelberg on 18 December 1905, indicated that the 'Witbooi people's aggression' was resurging in what was then known as the 'Hottentot War'.

Specific Battles

- Battle at Stampriet on 1 January 1905
- Battle at Naris on 4 December 1904
- Battle at Stampriet on 18 December 1904

Population Records

- 1900: Stampriet has 11 people of Cape origin
- 1901: 15 Cape settlers
- 1902: 24 English residents
- 1903: 27 English residents, 2 stateless persons
- 2023: 3 388 inhabitants

Road Transport

On 14 February 1927, South African Railways introduced the first Road Motor Transport Service over a distance of 72 km between Mariental and Stamprietfontein to assist farmers in transporting their products to the nearest railway.

Source: The Namibia Scientific Society

A Tapestry of Dreams

Ohajuura Junior and Senior Primary School

Text: Ndinelao Shikemeni | Images: Ndinelao Shikemeni | Layout: Conrad Hegarty

In the heart of northwestern Namibia, where the Epupa Falls cascade like a silver ribbon through the rugged landscape, lies a place where dreams take root and flourish: Ohajuura Junior and Senior Primary School, a project supported by the Gondwana Care Trust. This vibrant school, cradled amidst the traditional Himba villages, is not merely a building of bricks and mortar; it is a sanctuary where the laughter of children dances with the whispers of hopes and aspirations.

As one approaches the school, the air is filled with a sense of anticipation. The sun casts a warm glow over the ochre-hued huts close to the school, and as you step inside the classroom, you are greeted by the radiant smiles of eager learners. Each classroom buzzes with energy, where young minds are ignited with curiosity and a yearning for knowledge. The children, adorned in their traditional Himba attire, embody the spirit of their culture — proud and vibrant, they carry their heritage with grace.

The Himba people, known for their striking appearance and rich traditions, have woven their customs into the fabric of everyday life at Ohajuura. Here, education is not just about textbooks; it is an extension of their identity. The children attend classes in their beautiful traditional garments, allowing them to embrace their roots while embarking on a journey of learning. In this sacred space, tradition and education coexist harmoniously, nurturing both mind and spirit.

Among the children, one can see the glimmer of ambition in their eyes. They are not just learners; they are dreamers who aspire to become teachers, doctors, engineers, artists and so much more. Each child carries within them a story waiting to unfold — a tale of resilience shaped by the arid landscape that surrounds them. They understand that education is a bridge to a brighter future, one that can lead them beyond the horizons of their villages.

The school operates under the guidance of dedicated educators who believe in the transformative power of knowledge. Their passion fuels the curiosity within each learner, encouraging them to ask questions and seek answers. It is here that they learn not only about mathematics and science but also about their history and culture — lessons that empower them to honour their past while forging ahead into the future.

The support from the Gondwana Care Trust plays a pivotal role in this educational journey. Through initiatives like the Back-to-School Christmas Bag Project, children receive essential supplies that enable them to engage fully in their studies. These contributions are more than just material support; they represent a commitment to nurturing young minds and fostering a love for learning.

In this enchanting corner of Namibia, Ohajuura Junior and Senior Primary School stands as a place where dreams are nurtured amidst tradition and community. As we reflect on this vibrant tapestry woven from laughter, learning, and love, we are reminded that every child deserves the chance to dream big.

Together, let us support these young visionaries as they embark on their journeys toward fulfilling their aspirations.

Scan the QR code to discover ways you can collaborate with the Gondwana Care Trust. Together, we can sustainably empower Namibian communities.



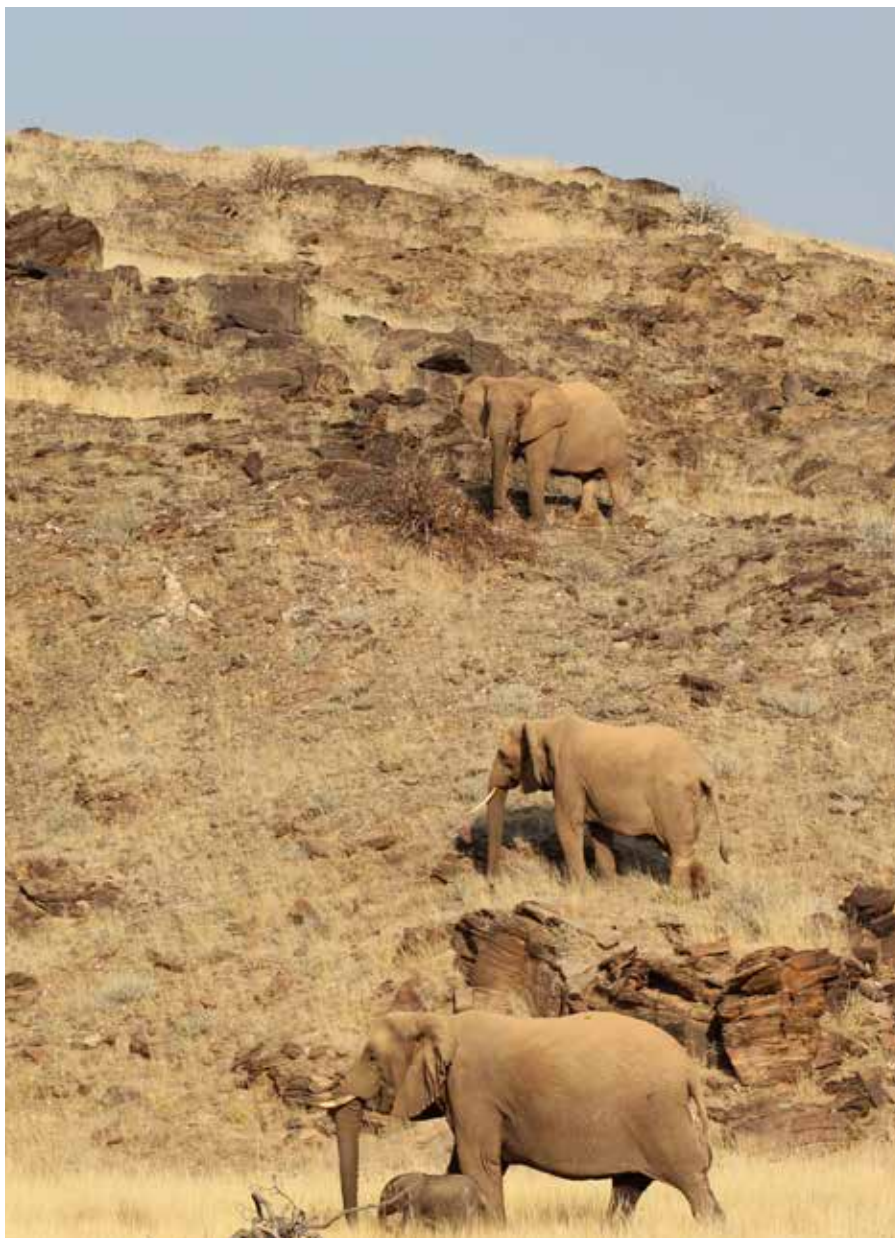




HIKING SAFARI IN DAMARALAND

So much beauty in a single country...and so many different ways to experience it. Hiking pulls you right into the landscape, and Okutembuka Safaris' 10-day Wilderness Damaraland Hike takes in some extraordinary parts of the country

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



Namibia's Damaraland is home to the most sensational landscapes. This 10-day trip will take you on an adventure from the enchanting Burnt Mountain to the Doros Crater, rocky terrain to pristine wilderness. The hike itself is five days, with memorable nights spent around the campfire under a blanket of stars, and landscapes where you'll be keeping an eye out for wildlife such as black rhino and free-roaming lions. On this hiking safari, wholesome meals and expert guidance is part of the experience.

The itinerary is an extremely well balanced one where you'll enjoy connecting with nature as much as you will the built-in time for relaxation.

This trip can be enjoyed by a first-time hiker as much as a seasoned trekker. Accommodation is in bed & breakfasts, campsites and a lodge.

Your Namibian journey begins as you land at Hosea Kutako International Airport, where you'll be taken by shuttle to your hotel in Windhoek. Put your feet up in anticipation of your five-day hike in Damaraland.



The next day, you'll journey from Windhoek to Camp Twyfelfontein, traversing captivating landscapes that showcase Namibia's diverse beauty. Along the way, dramatic geological formations, including the impressive Brandberg Mountain, provide stunning backdrops. When you arrive, you'll be near the Twyfelfontein rock engravings, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, that reveals the ancient connection of the San people to this land.

You can relax tomorrow, choosing to lie by the pool and acclimatise yourself for the upcoming hike, or you might prefer to seize the day, and head out on a guided game drive, scenic nature walk, or enjoy a cultural visit to nearby rock engravings.

The adventure begins with a warm welcome at 5:30pm, with introductions and a briefing at 6:00pm. The camp is all set up, and afterward the briefing, the fires are lit, and you'll enjoy a traditional barbecue or braai. There's



To become a millionaire would take 27 days, starting with \$0.01 and doubling that amount daily.



something very special about the camaraderie shared with fellow adventurers as everybody prepares for the journey ahead.

On Day 4, the journey is from Burnt Mountain to Doros Crater. After a hearty breakfast, there's a drive to the starting point at Burnt Mountain, ready for a 16km hike along rocky trails toward the breathtaking Doros Crater. This medium-difficulty trek offers opportunities to spot black rhinos in their natural habitat. It's snacks on the go, with the goal being to reach the mobile camp by lunchtime - the dedicated 2-man backup team handles camp chores and prepares nutritious meals.

The next day, it's Doros Crater to the Goantagab River, an 18km trek south, traversing the rocky terrain at a comfortable pace, still with a chance to see black rhinos. This wilderness is home to free-roaming lion, elephant, rhino, leopard, and cheetah. Camping is at Euphorbia





More than 50% of humans have a favourite pillow and can hardly sleep without it. Known as Pillow Loyalty.

Camp, where the lack of light pollution reveals a breathtaking night sky filled with stars, complemented by a stunning sunset illuminating the Brandberg.

Wake up refreshed, it's a wonderful 15km downhill hike to Cheetah Camp, where you'll walk straight toward the magnificent Brandberg. This leg is guaranteed to lift spirits as everybody navigates sandy paths across the Namibian Meseta. Enjoy a leisurely afternoon with options to read, meditate, play chess, or relax in the shade.

It's the final stretch to Brandberg White Lady Lodge, arguably the most spectacular hiking day. Descending from the mini-escarpment towards the breakfast spot, the traverse involves gravel plains. After breakfast, it's time to explore granite boulders and head for the Ugab River for the final 5km, destination Brandberg White Lady Lodge.

After a good breakfast at White Lady Lodge, make your way to Swakopmund for two days of relaxing and

rejuvenating after the five-day hike. Here you can unwind along the stunning coastline, explore the charming town, or indulge in a host of action activities.

Wake up in Swakopmund, breakfast at a local café, then take a scenic stroll along the beachfront promenade and enjoy ocean views and watching the seals basking in the sun. Visit the Swakopmund Jetty for photo opportunities, and explore the Swakopmund Museum to learn about the region's history and culture. For lunch, local seafood at one of the town's many restaurants, is a must. In the afternoon, choose from exciting activities like quad biking in the dunes or a scenic boat cruise to spot dolphins and marine life.

Today is Day 10, the end of a wonderful trip full of memories. You'll drive back to Windhoek and return the rental vehicle. After vehicle check-in, guests are transferred to the airport, ensuring a smooth conclusion to your Damaraland hiking adventure. 🍷

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FOCUS ON

Stephané Conradie

Namibian artist Stephané Edith Conradie's work traverses the realms of material culture, social identity, and historical memory

edited by Laschandre Coetzee | photographs by Matt Slater & Mark Wessels



Currently based in Cape Town, South Africa, Stephane Conradie is a lecturer of print media at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, where she also plays an active role in contemporary African art discourse. Though her academic background is rooted in printmaking, she has made a name for herself with her striking bricolage assemblages, which delve into the layered complexities of identity, history, and memory.

Conradie's unique artistic approach has earned her a place in prestigious collections such as the Leridon Collection in France, the Wits Art Museum Collection, the UNISA Art Gallery, and the Spier Collection in South Africa, as well as the GAUTREAUX Collection in Belgium. In 2024,

she was awarded the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Arts, an honour that recognized her for her thought-provoking presentation at the National Arts Festival entitled *Wegwysers Deur Die Blinkuur* (Way-finders Through the Twilight). This body of work explores the emotional and material handover between generations, using everyday objects as metaphors for the transmission of values and memories across time.

Born and raised in Namibia, Conradie completed her PhD in Visual Arts in 2023 at Stellenbosch University. Her research stems from a personal curiosity about how people, especially within her own family, categorize and arrange objects in their homes, and how these objects



“Conradie’s sculptures
are far more than
aesthetic compositions;
they act as visual
commentaries on the
ways in which material
objects mediate identity
and historical memory.”

reflect broader social, economic, and historical contexts. Her work focuses particularly on domestic spaces in lower and working-class homes, where seemingly mundane objects like trinkets, figurines, and furniture hold significant cultural and symbolic weight.

Central to her work is the concept of creolisation, which refers to the blending of cultures and traditions that emerge from displacement and forced migration. For Conradie, creolisation is not just a historical process but an ongoing one, reflected in the dynamic exchange of symbols and practices that shape contemporary identity. Her assemblages bring together discarded or overlooked materials, creating intricate sculptures that reflect the chaotic and layered nature of identity formation.

Conradie’s sculptures are far more than aesthetic compositions; they act as visual commentaries on the ways in which material objects mediate identity and historical

memory. Her works are imbued with the tensions of memory and forgetting, life and death, and the fragility of intergenerational transmission. By repurposing discarded objects and materials, Conradie gives new life to these remnants of the past, making them symbols of both loss and continuity.

Ultimately, Stephané Edith Conradie’s work challenges us to rethink the significance of the objects we live with and the ways in which they shape our sense of self and belonging. Her sculptures suggest that even the most ordinary objects are imbued with profound historical and cultural significance, offering a powerful commentary on the ways in which we construct meaning in both the private and public spheres. Through her bricolage assemblages, Conradie is not only preserving the past but also reimagining how it can inform contemporary understandings of identity in post-colonial Southern Africa. ❖



THE GATHERING

Namibia's creative community is set to unite at The Gathering, an inaugural event celebrating collaboration across art, design, culture, and business. Taking place on December 17, 2024, at Swakopmund's historic Woermann House Courtyard, the event will bring together artists, entrepreneurs, and innovators from diverse backgrounds.

With inclusivity at its core, The Gathering features talks, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities with industry leaders like Margaret Courtney-Clarke, Tuli

Mekondjo, and Dan Craven. Emerging talents can access corporate-sponsored scholarships, and students can gain experience as volunteers.

The event aims to foster mentorship, inspire creativity, and spark lasting connections within Namibia's creative economy.

For tickets, email theprojectroomnamibia@gmail.com or scan the QR code. Follow [@togather_nam](https://www.instagram.com/togather_nam) on Instagram for updates. ❖

By Laschandre Coetzee for The Project Room

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VILLA MARGHERITA

Where history meets luxury, Villa Margherita in Swakopmund offers a glorious, intimate place to lay your head, while you explore the area



Villa Margherita is more than a place to stay - it is a journey into the rich history of Swakopmund, wrapped in refined luxury. Built between 1908 and 1913, this iconic residence has graced the local landscape for over a century. Originally commissioned by Dr Brenner, it soon became known as the "Schwietering House" when owned by the esteemed Dr. Schwietering, whose legacy of care endured until his passing in 1976.

Now, Villa Margherita has been transformed from a historic home into an elegant boutique hotel. After a meticulous renovation that preserved its original charm, it reopened in 2008, blending sophistication with tranquillity in every detail. Guests can explore its lush grounds, discovering four unique buildings, namely The Manor, The Cottage, The Nest, and The Villa, each filled with character.





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Monthly charge (N\$) (12-month)	749	879	1,159	1,979
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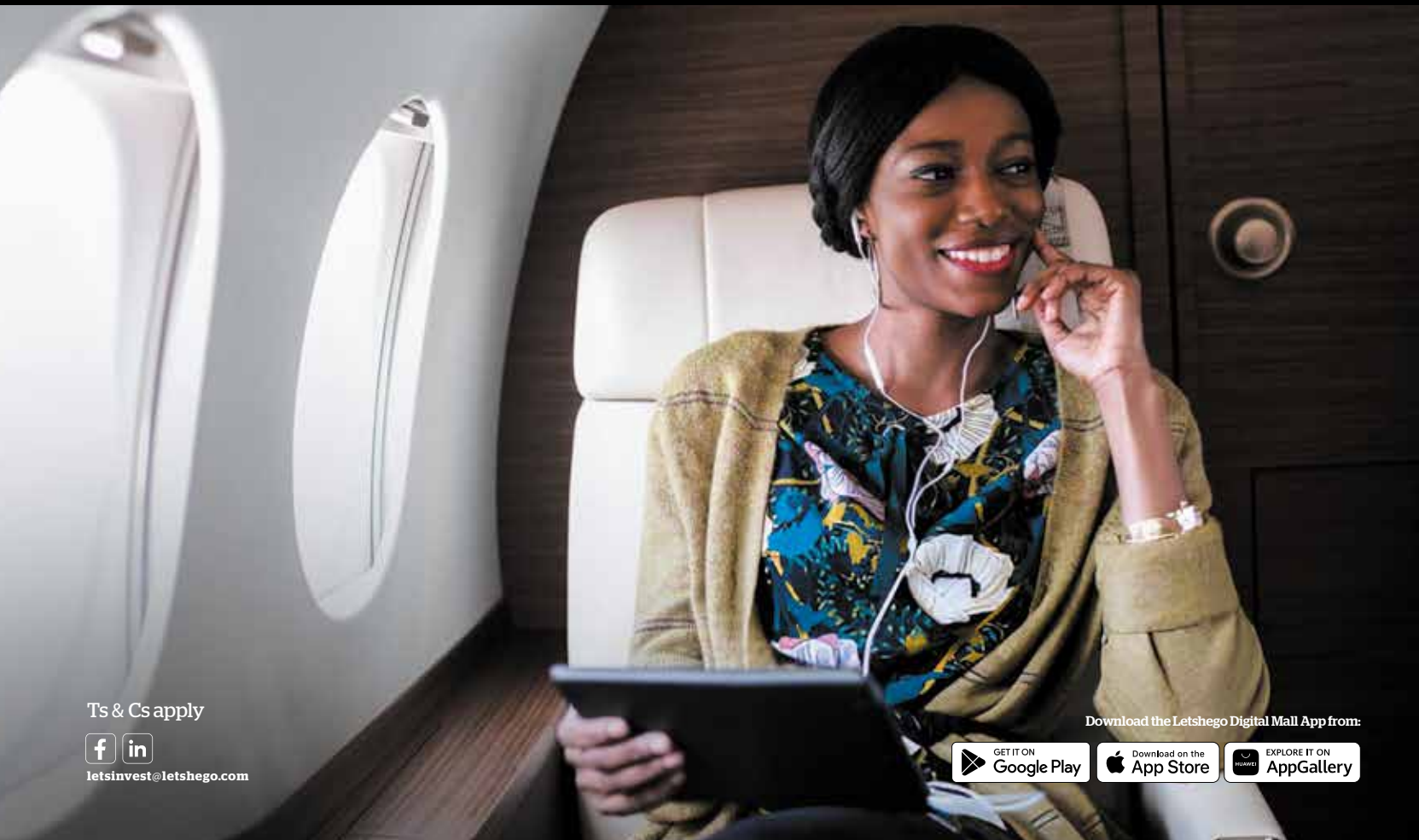
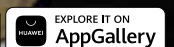


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Zannier Omaanda

66 | DECEMBER 2024

Luxury comes in many different shades, no more so than when stepping off that planet into this one, where wildlife, an extraordinary landscape, good living and supreme comfort take centre stage. Just add a sensational Spa to the mix, and you will have discovered the cornerstone of well-being

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



The exquisite lodge of Zannier Omaanda lies on a 9 000 hectare conservancy reserve, alongside the N/a'an ku se foundation, one dedicated to the conservancy of Namibia's wildlife, land and cultures. Today, the Zannier Reserve by N/a'an ku sê ensures the preservation of the local natural wealth and the durability of the wildlife. The goal here was to create a space at one with nature, allowing guests to disconnect from their daily lives, and enjoy the strong sense of well-being.

There's a great sense of place here, with traditional Owambo architecture and elevated views stretching across soul-stirring savannas to the distant Khomas Hochland plateau. Precious antiques, traditional fabrics and authentic ceramics continue the cultural context of the rush-thatched round huts, each with their own sunken bathtub and panoramic terrace.





Famously watch wildlife drink at the nearby watering hole, from your infinity poolside seat. Try local delicacies prepared at the Ambo Delights restaurant. Discover the soulful healing of ancient Namibian therapies that fuse local roots, herbs and spices. As night falls, gather for starlit fireside cocktails, around the authentic Boma. And in collaboration with N/a'an ku sê ...breakfast with meerkats at sunrise; track a rhino or a herd of elephants going for a swim; spy a leopard climbing a Jackalberry tree or simply experience the nocturnal beauty of the savanna – all with your own private guide.

Fresh food, rest, connection to nature, a range of activities...and pampering are the order of the day. The spa at Omaanda is sensational. Its treatments, provided in a traditional hut, are inspired by local Namibian beliefs. Comprising two double treatment rooms, this space

is dedicated to take care of the body, enabling perfect union of body, spirit and soul. The treatments all embrace age-old healing techniques, beauty recipes that replicate ancient Namibian beliefs and cultural traditions, with therapies designed to encompass mind, body and spirit. According to the Spa team, “Our sole aim is to take care of your personal temple. It houses your mind, spirit and intelligence and we must nurture and care for it daily.” How good does that sound?

The heated outdoor infinity pool is the cherry on the top – fitness alongside pampering is an intoxicating combination at Omaanda.

At Zannier Omaanda, it is a truly intimate experience, with attention to detail at every turn. You will be captivated...and restored. 🍷

19  19

LEISURE

NAMIBIA THROUGH OUR EYES



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THROUGH OUR EYES

At O&L Leisure, we are dedicated to ensuring that our exclusive experiences reflect the warmth and hospitality of Namibia. Every detail has been thoughtfully planned to connect you with the soul of our country. Guided by our brand vision, "Namibia Through Our Eyes," we invite you to experience a journey that's as authentic as it is luxurious.

WELCOME TO LEISURE TOURS

We are proud and excited to introduce a new service offering in our portfolio - Leisure Tours. Here, luxury meets adventure in a series of exclusive, tailored tours for the discerning traveller. Our handpicked itineraries reveal Namibia's stunning landscapes, diverse wildlife and cultural richness. With exceptional accommodations, personalised service and unique excursions, Leisure Tours offers you an inspiring and intimate way to explore the beauty of Namibia—through our eyes.

This new product is designed to offer a fully enveloping Namibian experience, perfectly suited to adventurous souls and luxury seekers alike. Our handpicked itineraries capture the essence of Namibia's unique beauty while providing a seamless blend of relaxation, exploration and exclusivity. Leisure Tours is an artfully selected journey into Namibia's soul, where you'll encounter the iconic landscapes, fascinating wildlife and welcoming culture that makes Namibia truly special.





In Swakopmund, stay for a few nights at Strand Hotel Swakopmund, enjoying award-winning dining, coastal culture and unique adventures. Followed by a visit to the rugged beauty of Spitzkoppe, the SAN Living Museum and the striking geological formations of the Erongo Mountains.

Our itineraries offer a variety of ways to experience Namibia. Whether you're interested in a scenic guided road adventure or prefer a private flight circuit, Leisure Tours has a package to meet your needs. From the majestic dunes of Sossusvlei to the lush rivers of the Zambezi region, each experience is thoughtfully created to provide luxurious comfort and exclusive access to some of Namibia's most stunning destinations.

We invite you to discover Namibia's most scenic destinations with our handpicked itineraries. Here's a glimpse into our two main travel circuits:

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Continue your journey with wildlife encounters through game drives at Mokuti Etosha, located near the famed Etosha National Park. Conclude your adventure by the riverside at Chobe Water Villas, where peaceful sunsets set the scene for safaris with sightings of elephants, buffalo, hippos, and crocodiles.



Each destination offers an exclusive glimpse into Namibia's extraordinary beauty and culture, catering for relaxation and exploration - leaving you with unforgettable memories.



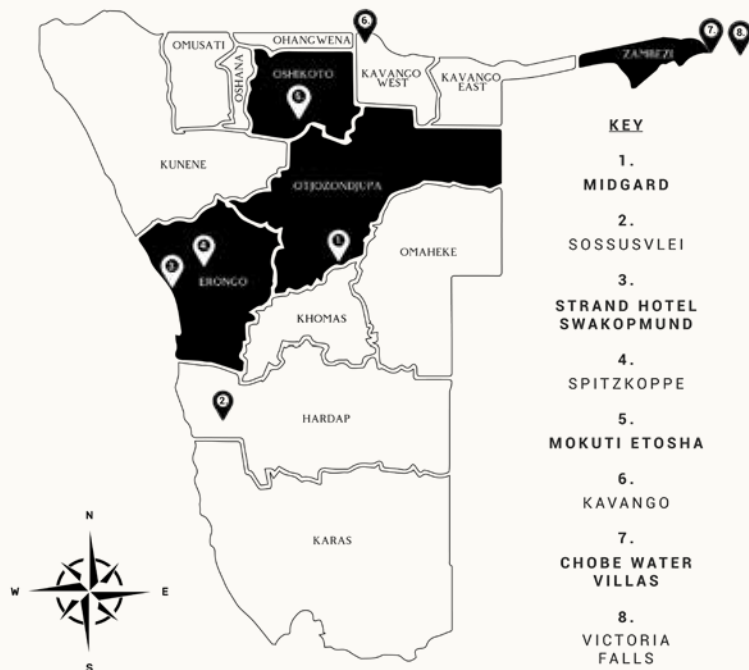
For those seeking a quicker, more exclusive journey, our Flight Circuit offers the same destinations with private charter flights. Experience the same luxurious stops—from Midgard to Strand Hotel Swakopmund, Mokuti Etosha, Chobe Water Villas — with the added convenience of quick transfers and aerial views over Namibia's scenic landscapes. This circuit ensures you have more time to embrace each destination, capturing the beauty of Namibia from road and sky.

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What superheroes, bullfrogs and a big conservation conference have in common

words by Linda de Jager | photograph supplied



Dr. Fortunate Phaka says a lot of outdoor playing as a child has led him down the conservation path. The academic from North-West University featured at the annual Southern African Wildlife Management Association (SAWMA) conference in October, sharing his insights on how cultural practices impact the environment.

The conference was hosted by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation in Namibia. This marked the first time the conference took place outside South Africa.

Phaka's passion for frogs provided a unique perspective on conservation – especially following the remarkable discovery of a new bullfrog species in Khaudum National Park in the Kavango West region earlier this year.

The Beytell's bullfrog (*Pyxicephalus beytelli*) is the largest African bullfrog discovered in the last 104 years.

Who had the greatest influence in sparking your interest in conservation during your childhood? My grandmother always believed children should play outdoors. This resulted in me exploring all the natural areas surrounding our rural village, which fostered my interest in wildlife.

My late grandfather loved indigenous cultures and their diversity. From our conversations, I realised there are different indigenous perspectives on wildlife, and some of these were protective of wildlife.

My interest in wildlife and cultural diversity is combined today to focus on frogs and reptiles in areas with a lot of cultural diversity.

You have received numerous accolades for your work over the last decade. Which ones mean the most to you? It's difficult to choose, as I'm always grateful for any praise I receive and am often surprised at my work being noticed. Among the most cherished is having a superhero character, a 'super scientist' called The Scribe, based on me and my work. People should be able to relate to science, and a real-life superhero is the best way for young kids with dreams as wild as mine once were to relate to it.

Another is the North-West University's Research and Innovation Excellence Award, because getting recognition from your home (in this case my research home for almost 10 years) is always that much more special.

Speaking of home, no accolade will ever come close to my teary-eyed mother saying: "I'm proud of you son. I wish your late uncle and role model was here to witness all of this."

How is the recent discovery of the largest frog in the last 104 years relevant to your work? One of the people who described

this new bullfrog, Prof Louis du Preez, is my research mentor, and this is yet another opportunity to learn from him.

Beytell's bullfrog is also harvested for food, as with other bullfrogs, and the work I presented at the conference in Windhoek was on how this harvesting of frogs for consumption can be studied to determine whether it's a conservation concern.

What was the essence of your conference presentation?

The focus of my presentation at this year's conference was that we know of different types of nature-based cultural practices, but we often emotionally dismiss them as having negative impacts.

What we should instead be doing is empirically investigating whether those nature-based cultural practices have negative, positive or benign impacts on the wildlife involved.

The wildlife group I chose was bullfrogs as they are eaten throughout southern Africa, but it is yet to be determined how many are harvested per year and whether the magnitude of the harvesting is big enough to affect the ability of bullfrog populations to replenish themselves.

Studying nature-based cultural practices improves our knowledge of how people use wildlife, and this in turn informs conservation planning so that more of the citizenry's perspectives and needs are considered.

What were your key takeaways and insights? There is a general move towards conservation approaches that work with people living in areas surrounding nature reserves. This integrative approach to conservation can potentially improve the chances of success for conservation initiatives, as it is more inclusive than conventional approaches, which generally exclude those outside protected boundaries.

Do you refer to yourself as a herpetologist or a batrachologist? Weirdly enough, I refer to myself as an environmental scientist with a special focus on frogs and reptiles. I say this because I focus on frogs and reptiles and the people they share the environment with. This allows me to better understand how we can improve conservation so that it better considers people, especially indigenous people, in its planning. 🌿

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BARBARA PALVIN

The Last Word 2024



words by Chris Coetzee

Recently, I decided to dabble in some DIY. Why? Because it's the manly thing to do. Armed with misplaced confidence and a toolkit that's mostly decorative, I embarked on a series of home improvement "projects."

First, I tackled a pair of shorts with loose stitching. I grabbed super glue and, thankfully, it only nearly became part of my anatomy. Feeling invincible, I turned my attention to building a shower floor. Today, it functions as a very effective puddle. My *pièce de résistance*? Attempting to repair the lawnmower.

These weren't failures; no, they were "learning experiences." That's the era we live in—where we rebrand disaster as "growth." Gone are the days of calling it like it is. Instead, every flop is met with applause. "Well done! Now we know, and we've gained some experience!" they say. But... is it, though?

The world seems to have adopted a similar DIY approach. Humanism showed up with grand ideals but forgot the toolkit. Responsibility? Instead, we've traded critical thinking for buzzwords like "next-level thinking" and "game-changers." The results are often as effective as my puddle floor and glued shorts.

In writing this, I was advised to avoid certain words—terms like "900-meter monstrosity," "synthetic,"

"boogeyman," "a recent fiasco," and "questionable decisions." I'll respect that advice.

Yet, amidst this chaos, a few gems shine. Take the Namibia2Go office at Hosea Kutako International Airport. Their attention to detail is truly next-level—not just locally, but globally. It's a place that doesn't just offer a service; it's a destination in itself. They've mastered the art of creating an experience, reminding us what Namibian innovation and hard work look like when done right. In fact, it's done so well on a global scale that it's with great pride We call Namibia2Go a Michelangelo Magazine Approved destination. And as mentioned in the November edition (P20), there is no higher praise.

As 2024 wraps up, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our readers and clients. Your support has taken Michelangelo Magazine around the world this year. To the unsung heroes who keep hope alive, you are the ones who inspire us to dream bigger.

And to those heroes keeping dreams alive—especially those making Namibia so much better—thank you. You are the ones who make this world a better place and fill my heart with hope. Wishing you a wonderful Christmas, an amazing holiday season, and my deepest appreciation for all your support this year. ❖



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