

Namibia Overland Safari Itinerary



Limited to 12 Participants

April 4-17, 2011

Namibian Overland Itinerary

Note: Depending on departure city, connecting flights, airline carrier and route, 1-2 days travel time may be required to reach Windhoek. Flights from the USA on South African Airways leave JFK at 11:15am and arrive in Johannesburg the following morning at 8:40am. Flights onward to Windhoek take 2 hours and arrive at 10:45am, or 2:20pm on SAA; and 8:45am or 7:25pm on Air Namibia. Flights from the USA going through Frankfurt arrive in Windhoek at 7:25am.

April 4, 2011 (Mon): Welcome to

Namibia

Fly into Windhoek. Depending on your arrival time, you'll be met at the international airport and driven 90 minutes to a small safari guest farm northwest of the capitol. Dusternbrook—one of Namibia's oldest guesthouses—has a 1909 Colonial farmhouse situated high on a riverbank overlooking the African savanna. Each guestroom is unique, from African inspired rooms to luxury safari tents.

No group activities are planned. Just a mellow day for adjusting to the time change, resting after sleepless flights, or exploring at leisure. Relax on sunbeds by the pool, sit on the viewing deck and look for baboons through your telephoto or stretch your legs on marked walking trails (1-4 hours) where you might spot wildlife such as hartebeest, giraffe, kudu or oryx. There are plenty of diversions should you desire...

Ask about accompanying Suzie, an orphaned cheetah, on her afternoon exercise run down by the river. **Join the Cats Unlimited drive to photograph leopard and cheetahs at 2:30pm, or the game drive that departs at 4pm.** We'll get acquainted over dinner before providing a trip orientation and slide show of desert landscapes highlighting the days to come.
Dusternbrook Guest Farm (D)

April 5, 2011 (Tues): Cheetahs and Leopards...

This morning take an optional drive into the Khomas Hochland Mountains. The 1.5 hour sunrise drive is in an open jeep. Photo opportunities are mainly landscapes with the chance of seeing skittish Hartmann mountain zebras, endemic to Namibia, and other game in the distance. An hour before lunch, we'll meet to review tips for wildlife photography. Discussion will include composition elements relating to animals and differing ways of capturing motion. We may also review exposure, aperture, shutter speed, digital workflow, or other topics based on interest.

Namibia is known for their cats—powerful, secretive leopards and fast running cheetahs. Seeing them in the wild is extremely rare. Yet, this afternoon we'll get introduced to these elusive species and photograph them in their natural habitat. The Cats Unlimited drive begins at 2:30pm, and is open to visiting day guests as well. After photographing a leopard in a tree from telephoto distance, we'll move on to the

cheetahs. Expect to get quite close! They often surround the jeep. At 4pm, continue on a game drive through the ranch where plains game kudu, oryx, giraffe, waterbuck, zebra, hartebeest, ostrich, warthog, wildebeest, eland and rhino roam.

Dusternbrook Guest Farm (B, L, D)

April 6, 2011 (Wed): Coastal Desert

After breakfast, we'll meet our Namibian driver/guide who will accompany us for the rest of our journey. Our Overland tour begins with a 5 hour highway drive to the coastal town of Swakopmund, a German resort town. Along the way, we'll stop for lunch in Karibib, a town known for its white marble and minerals. Our accommodation is a brand new contemporary guesthouse in a quiet neighborhood a couple blocks from the Atlantic Ocean. Dinner tonight will be at the Tug, a popular seafood restaurant built on stilts overlooking the coast.

Swakopmund Guesthouse (B, D)

April 7, 2011 (Thurs): Namib Desert & Skeleton Coast

Swakopmund sits on the edge of the mighty **Namib Desert, the world's oldest desert**. This morning, an expert regional guide will introduce us to the desert, and oh, what an intro it is! Taking jeeps into the Namib will be an experience you won't forget. Giant sand dunes, desert-adapted plants, a sea of undulating sand with peaked tips and fascinating patterns await.

In Kuiseb Delta we'll learn about the endemic Inara plant, a type of melon that the indigenous Topnaar people rely on for their survival, and visit a midden, a 'living museum' of pottery, human bones, beads and other Topnaar ancestral items discovered in the sand long ago. **We may meet Topnaars along the river and see petrified elephant tracks in the clay. Windswept dunes, shifting sands and changing tides keep Sandwich Harbor inaccessible to outsiders.** But our knowledgeable guide will lead us through this dramatic landscape and bring us to a unique wetland lagoon where dolphins, whales, seals and 34 species of birds co-exist. The itinerary is dependent on the tidal schedule, as the Harbor is only accessible at low tide. We'll also look for flamingos along Walvis Bay. Dinner on own.

Swakopmund Guesthouse (B, L)

April 8, 2011 (Fri): Desert Creatures & Aerial Views

After breakfast, our driver will take our luggage and head on to our next destination while we go on a Living Desert Tour. In the dunes between Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, we'll photograph creepy crawlies that lurk beneath the sand. Our guide Tommy reads sand tracks to find **sand-diving lizards, Fitzinger's burrowing skinks, Palmata geckos, reticulated sand lizards, Peringuey's Adder, scorpions and the Dancing White Lady Spider**. He has a 98% success rate finding each of these, providing us with **awesome opportunities to photograph these desert creatures** we'd otherwise never see. Macro and telephoto lenses are suggested to maximize your shots. Our energetic guide loves what he does, and this fun excursion often lasts past noon. We'll show how to diffuse the harsh light so your photos rock!

This afternoon is a special treat. A scenic flight along the coast and across dunes takes us to our next destination, Sossusvlei. All passengers will have window seats. We'll see **aerial views of the Sea of Sand** that we visited yesterday and continue south along the **Skeleton Coast** where shipwrecks lie buried under dunes. Turning inland, we'll pass over stunning desert dunes tinted shades of pale apricot to brick red. Abstract patterns, colors, and shapes may look slightly muted from the sky, but little tricks in Photoshop will make your images pop. So snap away...

Landing in Sesriem, we'll transfer to our lodge nearby. The brand new Sossus Dune Lodge is the **only accommodation within the Namib-Naukluft National Park**, and we are very excited to return here, as it allows us access to the dunes at sunrise and sunset! (Other lodges claim to offer nature drives into the park for sunrise/sunset photography, but the government strictly monitors and restricts all access outside those hours and no longer grants special access photography permits.) And once inside the gate, the famed Sossusvlei Dunes are still an hour away.

Red colored dunes and mountain views are visible from our luxurious chalets, built out of canvas and thatch, linked by raised wooden walkways. We'll share meals in the main dining room of the lodge loosely styled after an African Ovambo village. The handsome open-walled lounge overlooking the pool makes a great spot for informal gatherings to share photos. If daylight permits, we may explore the park until sunset. Dune 45 is a gigantic, spectacular dune, colored vivid orange that many people feel compelled to climb. Photographing the climbers from the base of the dune can create some nice silhouettes. In changing light, the dunes transform into brilliant shades with dark shadowy sensuous forms.

Sossus Dune Lodge (B, L, D)

April 9, 2011 (Sat): Sunrise at Sossusvlei & Sunset at Deadvlei

Each morning the entrance to the Namib-Naukluft National Park is jam-packed with motorists waiting to apply for park permits, only granted once the gates open at sunrise. But we're already inside! We'll depart around 5am, allowing us time to search out perfect compositions around Dune 45 before the sun rises an hour later. Early morning is also the best time to spot any wildlife, such as oryx, a striking black and white desert antelope that wanders the dunes until crowds scare him away. Depending on time, energy and interest, we may continue to the 2x4 parking area—an hour away—where we could hike to the cracked white pan Hiddenvlei.

Alternatively, **hot air ballooning over the dunes is an option this morning**, at additional cost (N3950). This popular sunrise excursion often sells out, so advance reservations are a must. This gentle ride glides over soft muted pastels in an ever-changing landscape. A champagne breakfast with tables and chairs set up in the desert follows the hour long balloon ride. Highly recommended!

Mid-day is time to recharge batteries—yours and your camera. And then, the long awaited Deadvlei and Sossusvlei! Our guide will drive us an hour to the 2x4 parking lot

where we'll hire drivers and their custom built Uri Gameviewer vehicles that are needed to plod through the thick, deep sand to reach these distant gems. **Sossusvlei is a large orange dune in a dry valley**, created by a river which once flowed between enormous red dunes. When the light fades, S-curve crests cast shadows and create interesting shapes.

But Deadvlei surpasses Sossusvlei for surreal scenery. A 30 minute walk across dunes brings us to **Deadvlei, a vast white sun-baked pan, cracked into palm-sized chunks, surrounded by apricot dunes**. The dunes sport tiny green vegetation in the background, but the pan itself contains many dead, gnarled Camelthorn trees. Void of water for 700 years they've become petrified. Bare black branches rise up from the pan like sinister creatures. No wonder this scenery was featured in Jennifer Lopaz's movie, *The Cell*. The contrast of these eerie trees in the pan against the backdrop of orange dunes and blue skies will no doubt be some of your favorite images from this trip.
Sossus Dune Lodge (B, L, D)

April 10, 2011 (Sun): Sunrise at Deadvlei & Dune Photography

A second day is devoted to this magical place. Again this morning, we can rise early and photograph the incredible scenery before the crowds arrive. Our guide will take us along the 65km road to the parking lot where our Uri Gameviewer drivers await. **Explore Deadvlei at dawn for a different perspective. Or climb the orange dune of nearby Sossusvlei.** Back to the lodge by late morning.

Alternatively, sleep in, have breakfast at the lodge and wander over to Sesriem Canyon. It lies just south of our lodge, and is easy to explore on your own. From the rim you can reach the bottom of the canyon floor in 20 minutes. Follow the dry riverbed along the length of the canyon for an hour. Time to swim, download images, or nap after lunch. Mid-afternoon we'll travel through the dunes looking for compelling lines and shadows as we spend our last sunset in Namib National Park.
Sossus Dune Lodge (B, L, D)

April 11, 2011 (Mon): Luderitz

Today is the longest travel day on our journey. Departing after breakfast, we'll head south to the coastal town of Luderitz. The 6 hour drive may be lengthened by stops for photography as we travel along the southern reaches of the Namib-Naukluft Desert. We hope to see wild horses again as we pass through Aus. Our destination is **Luderitz, a German harbor town wedged between desolate dunes and the Atlantic**. Pastel colored homes and German colonial architecture dot the hilly streets in this foggy bay. Flamingos, rock pools, and coastal views can be found among the lagoons, beaches and peninsulas that stretch along the coast. Situated on the edge of town, on a private beach, is our accommodation the Nest Hotel. The hotel boasts oceanfront rooms, a pool, sauna, solarium, Oyster Bar, seafood meals and 24 hour electricity!
Luderitz Nest Hotel (B, L, D)

April 12, 2011 (Tues): Kohlmanskop Ghost Town

Once upon a time, in 1908, in the desert sands not far from Luderitz, a railroad worker noticed an odd little stone stuck to his shovel and brought it to his foreman. A diamond! Word spread quickly, people flocked, and a new town sprung up on the site where diamonds were so plentiful that people scooped them up by handfuls. Within 15 years, over 5 million carats were found and Kolmanskop flourished. **Now a ghost town, the once-magnificent mansions lie half buried in shifting sands.**

We have a special permit that allows us to enter this restricted Forbidden Zone and to **wander around this eerie place from sunrise to sunset.** Inside the diamond-seeker's homes, the 100 year old interiors show the effects of mighty winds, rain and time. Peeling wallpaper, fading paint, and varying piles of sand edging the walls and jamming doors into permanent positions are visible through glassless windows. Remnants of a hospital, bakery, bowling alley, dance hall and rusting equipment are scattered throughout this fascinating place. A tour of this former diamond mining town takes place at 9:30am (when it becomes open to the public). Local guides present an informative, entertaining tour of the colorful people and events that occurred here so long ago.

There's a café on site to provide snacks or lunch. Midday you have the option of staying at Kohlmanskop or returning to Luderitz with our driver to relax at the pool, download images or explore the town on your own. Late afternoon return to Kohlmanskop to photograph the half-buried homes as the sun casts warm slants on the sand-filled rooms. After dinner, bring laptops to the lounge to share images, have photography discussions or HDR tutorials in Photoshop.

Luderitz Nest Hotel (B, D)

April 13, 2011 (Wed): Fish River Canyon

Optional **sunrise shoot of the lagoons and misty coasts along the peninsula** (5:30-8:30am), then back to the hotel for breakfast and a late checkout. Departing Luderitz at 11am, we'll travel east along southern Namibia into the Nama Karoo Desert, where the 2nd largest canyon on earth cuts through a primordial landscape. The Fish River Canyon was created millions of years ago by glaciers, faults and erosion. People from the Stone Age left remnants of their existence. **Ancient pictographs and early tools have been found in numerous sites along bends in the river that snakes through the mighty canyon.** It is considered one of Africa's wonders, yet most tourists never see it, as it is farther south than most people venture.

Our luxury accommodation is the only lodge perched directly on the canyon rim.

Set in a grove of quiver trees, this new contemporary lodge offers views of the canyon from sunrise to sunset. Chalets are situated on the western rim with views over the deepest part of the canyon, to enjoy sights from your bedroom. Other perks include outdoor showers, Nama art, and the option to sleep under the stars. A viewing deck, lap pool, Namibian art curio and library are also on site. Arriving by mid-afternoon we'll have time to settle into our rooms before joining a sundowner drive that will bring us to stunning panoramic views of Fish River Canyon. A home-cooked dinner will be served

in front of a fire in the lodge.
Fish River Canyon Lodge (B, L, D)

April 14, 2011 (Thurs): Fish River Canyon Excursion

Today we embark on an **all day journey to the floor of this magnificent 549 meter deep canyon**. As we drive, look for black eagles gliding the thermal updrafts. Succulent quiver trees grow out of the rocky canyon, marked by various geological features from quartz, shale, and limestone to dramatic fault lines. Our guide will search for desert adapted plants and wildlife such as mountain zebra, klipspringer, oryx and kudu that roam in the side canyons and valleys. Reaching the canyon floor we'll have lunch beside permanent rock pools that once attracted Stone Age people to this region. We'll explore the ancient sites and see early tools and pictographs etched into the rocks before heading back up to the rim.

Photograph the sunset from your room or search out a vantage point that includes a quiver tree in the foreground. Quiver trees, found only in the southern Namibia, are actually aloe plants up to 5 meters tall with thick succulent leaves and peeling bark that are quite intriguing. Telephoto or macro shots of the bark make interesting abstracts, while the **weird shapes of the quiver tree make good subjects either backlit or silhouetted against the sunset**, a great time to photograph them.
Fish River Canyon Lodge (B, L, D)

April 15, 2011 (Fri): Bizarre Balancing Rocks & Kalahari Desert

This morning a short drive brings us to Giant's Playground, where ancient dolomite **rocks balance precariously on top of one another**. It looks like strong winds could disrupt their careful pose, but the massive collection of boulders have been piled high for centuries. The Kalahari Desert is our next and final destination of the tour. The largest expanse of sand in the world, the Kalahari that stretches across 9 African countries is characterized by red sand dunes, open grassy plains, gnarled Camelthorn trees, sparse vegetation and diverse animal life.

Our lodge, situated in a secluded valley between red dunes, has a viewing deck over a natural waterhole. A mix of luxurious chalets furnished with netted beds and exquisite décor are scattered in the dunes near a farmhouse lodge. A couple of captive cheetahs are on the property in association with the Cheetah Conservation Fund, as well as a few exotic pets. Ever take a walk with a springbok? This afternoon **choose between a cheetah feeding where you can photograph cheetahs up close, a guided walk, a photography hide, or a sundowner drive.**

Bagatelle Lodge (B, D)

April 16, 2011 (Sat): Kalahari Nature Drive

Early this morning a nature drive provides opportunities to photograph Kalahari landscapes, birds and animals. Game that may wander into view include giraffe, zebra, duiker, springbok, steenbok, black faced impalas, oryx and kudu. Check out mid-morning. A 3 hour drive brings us to the capitol city of Windhoek. Individual rooms have

been reserved for all participants, unless traveling as a couple, to provide privacy and space for packing. Afternoon free for processing images or relaxing. **Our farewell dinner will be on the premises of the chic guesthouse that is decorated with contemporary art.** As a grand finale after dinner, we hope to see some of everyone's favorite images taken on the trip.

Terra Afrika guesthouse (B, L, D)

April 17, 2011 (Sun): Departure

Enjoy a hot cooked breakfast before your 45 minute transfer to the international airport for flights home. Those who have an evening flight can spend the day at the guesthouse in the comfortable lounge or the outside terrace. New this year is wireless internet by the pool!

End of tour.

*Air Namibia flights to Johannesburg depart at **8:10am** and arrive at 9:55am, whereas flights on British Airways depart Windhoek at **13:55** and arrive in Johannesburg at 16:50. Air Namibia no longer flies direct to London, but instead flies to Frankfurt. Flights departing at **21:15** from Windhoek arrive in Frankfurt at 6:10am the next morning.*

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

Tour price of \$7,300 includes: all transportation within Namibia which includes an 18 seat air-conditioned bus, hired driver and Namibian guide, private chartered scenic flight, airport transfers, hired jeeps, Uri transport vehicles; 13 nights lodging (double occupancy); activities specified in the itinerary, game drives, sundowner drives; park and photography permits; concession fees; hired guides; meals as indicated; liability insurance, VAT tax, and even tips for lodge guides and Namibian staff.

Price does not include: international airfare and lodging if required en route to Namibia; single occupancy supplement; beverages and alcoholic drinks; 3 lunches and 1 dinner meal; optional activities; internet fees; laundry service; items of a personal nature; unforeseen increases in fuel prices; and fluctuating exchange rates that drop below RAND/NAM 7.50 to US 1.00. **Single occupancy** supplement is **\$700**.

Deposit of \$2000 is due at time of registration. Single supplement is \$700 for private hotel rooms. Another \$2,650 is due October 1, 2010. Final balance of \$2,650 is due by February 1, 2011. In the unlikely event that this tour is canceled for any reason all deposits/payments will be fully refunded.

Cancellation Policy: Applies only to written cancellations received by Unique Photo Tours, LLC. A participant will be refunded as follows: Full refund if canceled 180 days prior to tour start date. Full refund--minus the deposit—if canceled 120 days prior to tour start date. No refund for participants who cancel less than 90 days prior to tour start date. To assure fairness to all, no exceptions can be made for illness, inability to travel or sudden fear of terrorism. Please secure travel insurance for peace of mind. No refund will be issued for any unused services while on the tour. In the unlikely event that UPT leaders cancel the tour for any reason all deposits/payments will be fully refunded.

Travel Insurance: We urge you to acquire travel insurance that covers trip cancellation, interruption, equipment and baggage. Unexpected events that can affect a tour are always a possibility. Allow for such contingencies. Try these or other credible website for travel insurance: www.travelguard.com, www.insuremytrip.com, www.quotetravelinsurance.com.

Smoking: We ask that there be no smoking anywhere we are assembled as a group, anywhere local regulation does not permit it, in the vehicles or where other participants may be bothered.

Health: Participants should be in good health and able to walk on uneven terrain. Participants under a doctor's care should seek advice about the appropriateness of this tour prior to registration. Submitting a registration form acknowledges that you have been cleared by your doctor to travel to this destination and are not an active risk for any reason to other participants.

**Reservation Form
Namibia Overland Safari Itinerary
April 4-17, 2011**

Tour Price: The price for this tour beginning and ending in Windhoek, Namibia is \$7,300 if paid by personal check. Credit card payment is 3% more (\$219) for a total of \$7,519.

Registration: After reading the itinerary, trip notes, terms and conditions of the tour please return this reservation form along with your deposit of \$2,000. Each participant must sign and return a separate Tour Participant Agreement which you will receive with your deposit receipt.

_____ I have read and accept the Terms & Conditions for this photo tour.

_____ I'm traveling alone but wish to share a room. Please find a MALE or FEMALE roommate. If we are unable to match you with another participant there will be a single supplement fee of \$700.

_____ I prefer to room alone, and am enclosing the \$700 single supplement fee.

Name: _____ Circle: Male Female

Address: _____

Email: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Passport number and date of issue: _____

Deposit: Enclosed is my \$2,000 deposit (plus single supplement if desired) of \$_____ to secure a space on the Namibian Overland Safari photo tour.

Make checks payable to: **Unique Photo Tours, LLC**
Mail completed forms to: **Box 3637, Evansville, IN 47735-3637**

To make deposit by credit card (\$2,060 includes the 3% processing fee):

Cardholder Name: _____

Billing Address: _____

Credit card number: _____

Card type: VISA or MASTERCARD Security code: _____ Exp date: _____

Photography level and experience: amateur semi-pro professional

Camera equipment you plan to bring:

What are looking forward to photographing most on this tour?

Anything in particular you would like to learn during this tour?

Any concerns, health risks or food allergies that we should know about?

Thank you for choosing Unique Photo Tours...Get ready for an awesome adventure!
info@UniquePhotoTours.com, 877-402-8687