

Namibia: Birds, Wildlife & Landscapes With Naturalist Journeys & Caligo Ventures

Aug. 25 – Sept. 4, 2020

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Tour Summary

11-Day / 10-Night Namibia Wildlife Tour
with Greg Smith
\$3790, from Windhoek
Airport is Huseo Kutako International (WDH)

Tour Highlights

- Experience the Namib, the world's oldest desert, a vast sea of sand so famous for massive red dunes at Sossusvlei
- Look for signature bird species such as Rockrunner, Herero Chat, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, and Dune Lark
- Walk amidst the fanciful granite outcrops of the Erongo Mountains, known for impressive wildlife, rock art, and over 200 species of birds
- Visit the base of the mighty Brandberg, Namibia's largest mountain (8450 feet), a dramatic inselberg that is home to exciting birds and mammals
- See one of the most bizarre plants on the planet, the Welwitschia
- Watch exciting raptors such as African Black (Verreaux's), Martial, and Booted Eagles, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Lanner and Peregrine Falcons, Rock Kestrel, and more
- Find arid-land specialty birds including chats, coursers, sandgrouse, numerous larks, bustards, and korhaans
- Enjoy the colonial seaside town of Swakopmund

Namibia hosts superlative scenery, a dramatic arid landscape of great beauty. Along our route we witness massive red dunes, fanciful granite outcrops, an isolated, iconic inselberg (the Brandburg), and colonial Swakopmund on the scenic coast. We find an array of arid-land birds, many not found in other parts of Africa. The Namib is the oldest desert in the world, with oases for a rich and sometimes odd array of mammal, plant, and birdlife. Oryx, Blesbok, hornbills, Rockrunner, Herero Chat, Dune Lark, numerous birds of prey and more await! Highlights include time at the vivid red dunes of Sossusvlei, a contrast to coastal Walvis Bay.

This tour is designed to pair with our 2020 [Botswana trips](#).

Day-to-Day Itinerary

Tues., Aug. 25 Arrivals in Windhoek

Welcome to Namibia! Please plan to arrive in Windhoek today. You are met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. Those arriving by early afternoon can join our guide to explore the open wooded hills and valleys surrounding the city. Rocky slopes should yield Short-toed Rock Thrush, White-tailed Shrike, Barred Warbler, and with luck a trip favorite, the Rockrunner. On a walk at Avis Dam, we hope to see Bradfield's and Palm Swifts, Rock Martin, and both Greater-striped and Pearl-breasted Swallow. Wetland birds are a focus here and South African Shelduck, Cape Shoveler, and Red-billed Teal are usually present. In the shrublands surrounding the dam Desert Cisticola, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Black-chested Prinia, and a variety of seedeaters are easily present.

We then return to our hotel to rest up from travel and enjoy dinner with your guide and traveling companions.
Accommodations at Pension Palmquell, Windhoek (B,L,D)



Wed. Aug. 26 & Thurs., Aug. 27 Avis Dam | Erongo Mountains

On Wednesday we have an optional pre-dawn start for those that wish to get to Avis Dam at first light. Birding is good here and well worth a return—for later arrivals you can catch up a bit in our time here. After an hour or so of birding we head back to the lodge for breakfast before packing up to head out for our adventures.

We then have about a 2.5-hour scenic drive to the Erongo Mountains. The Erongo Mountain Range stretches across the plains between the towns of Omaruru and Karibib and is home to a remarkably rich natural heritage. This expanse of rugged and picturesque wilderness serves as one of Namibia's most iconic places to visit, popular with tourists for its spectacularly scenic landscapes, magnificent caves and rock painting sites, and its impressive array of wildlife species. These include a number of hooved mammals of Africa: Wildebeest, Impala, Blesbok, Waterbuck, Kudu, Mountain Zebra, Oryx, Eland, Springbok, and over 200 species of birds. There are among others: Rhino, Elephant, Warthog, and Giraffe, and with luck we even have a chance at finding predators, including Leopard and Cheetah.

Birding in the Erongo Mountains is very rewarding and supports many of the Namibian near-endemics such as Violet Wood-Hoopoe, Damara Red-billed Hornbill, Rüppell's Parrot, White-tailed Shrike, Carp's Tit in the river beds, Rockrunner, Hartlaub's Spurfowl, and other specialty birds like Freckled Nightjar and Rosy-faced Lovebird in the granite outcrops. The whole environment is photogenic and magical.

Starting early on Thursday in the magic of morning light with high bird activity we hope to find Hartlaub's Spurfowl and other species. After breakfast, we spend the day birding, looking at rock engravings, and finding reptiles and mammals. Bird species we may find include: Red-billed Spurfowl, Helmeted Guineafowl, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Rufous-naped and Monotonous Larks, Black-cheeked and Violet-eared Waxbills, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, Monteiro's Hornbill, Golden-tailed, Cardinal and Bearded Woodpeckers, Orange River Francolin, Chestnut Weaver (rain dependent), Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, Verreaux's Eagle-owl, Spotted Eagle-owl, African Scops-Owl, Pearl-spotted Owl, and Southern White-faced Scops-owl.

We stay tonight at the lovely and intimate Hohenstein Lodge, nestled in the shadows of the surrounding mountains and surrounded by desert. The scene is very Southeast Arizona-esp, but imagine the yard animals here—Giraffes, Baboons, go-away-birds Enjoy a dip in the pool to cool off or simply relax on the patio to watch the sun set.

Accommodations at Hohenstein Lodge (B,L,D)



Fri., Aug. 28 & Sat., Aug. 29

Exploring Damaraland | The Brandberg | Welwitschia Plants

After breakfast we pack up and head to the mighty Brandberg, Namibia's largest mountain, rising to 8450 feet above sea level. It comprises a large massive inselberg of granite and has numerous valleys and gorges which offer not only good reptiles and birding but also larger animals such as Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, Oryx (Gemsbok), Springbok, Kudu, Klipspringer, and Leopard. Sculptured trees and shrubs add to the beauty and are great to scan for birds. Desert-adapted Elephant also occur in the Ugab River at the foot of the northern section of the mountain.

There is a rich diversity of reptiles, invertebrates such as scorpions and plant life including Welwitschia plant, the only member in the family *Welwitschiaceae* and is one of the more bizarre plants on the planet, on the western foot of the mountain.

Birds are plentiful and raptors such as the African Black (Verreaux's) Eagle, Martial Eagle, Booted Eagle, Black-chested Snake-Eagle as well as Lanner Falcon, Peregrine Falcon, and Rock Kestrel are fairly common. The near endemic Herero Chat, Benguela Long-billed Lark, and Rüppell's Korhaan can also be encountered at the foot of the mountain, while other species such as Mountain Wheatear, Familiar and Karoo Chat, Pale-winged Starling, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Red-faced and White-backed Mousebird, Bokmakierie, Grey-backed Cisticola, Black-chested Prinia and Sabota Lark are common. After a good rainfall thousands of Namaqua Sandgrouse can be found drinking at the many seeps and springs that run off the mountain.

We settle in tonight at Huab Lodge. The main building is large and open air with an odd-ball thatched roof that blends nicely into the landscape. Water on site brings in plentiful birds, and desert-dwelling Elephants can occasionally be seen near camp.

Accommodations at Huab Lodge (B,L,D)

Sun., Aug. 30 Damaraland to Spitzkoppe | Birding the Plains

Leaving behind the magnificent Huab Lodge we head towards the coast via Spitzkoppe. The Spitzkoppe is one of a series of impressive granite inselbergs that rise steeply out of the desert plains. It is at this imposing batholith where we have our best chance of finding Herero Chat. On the way we may also encounter the rare and



declining Burchell's Courser and many other sandy desert species like Stark's Lark and other strategic species like Karoo Long-billed Lark.

On the plains surrounding these hills we should see Rüppell's Korhaan, Namaqua Sandgrouse, Chat Flycatcher and Karoo Chat; African Hawk-Eagle and Lanner Falcon also occur in the hills as do Rosy-faced Lovebird, Carp's and Ashy Tit, White-throated Canary, Layard's Tit-Babbler, White-tailed Shrike, Double-banded Courser, and numerous species of larks including Starks, Sabota, Red-capped, Spike-heeled, Fawn-colored, and Rufous-naped. Attending their ball-shaped nests are White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, and we have chances to find Mountain Wheatear, Pale-winged Starling, Bradfield's Swift, Rockrunner, and Monteiro's and Damara Red-billed Hornbill.

We settle in to our accommodations in Swakopmund, a somewhat European-style
Accommodations at Pension Rapmund, Swakopmund (B,L,D)

Mon., Aug. 31 Birding Swakopmund & Namib Desert Fringes

The Namib Desert is the world's oldest desert, and although it stretches along the entire length of Namibia's coastline into southern Angola and even the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, the Namib commonly refers to the vast sea of sand extending from Luderitz to Swakopmund. This vast expanse of breathtakingly beautiful sandy desert features remarkably varied scenery including, the massive red dunes of the world-renowned Sossusvlei, the moonscapes of the Namib-Naukluft Park, the stark beauty of the Atlantic Coast and a diversity of fauna and flora. This windswept, arid, ancient landscape is teeming with desert-adapted wildlife such as endemic chameleons, Brown Hyena, Gemsbok, jackals, and seals along the coastline and a variety of plant life including the famous Welwitschia plant, a unique living fossil.

We stop in at the Swakopmund salt works to look for Gray's Lark. This pale-colored desert lark can be difficult to locate as it blends in perfectly to the expansive gravel plains which it frequents in the true Namib Desert. Another good find would be the pale form of Tractrac Chat as well as Familiar Chat, Red-capped Lark, and with luck, Rufous-eared Warbler and Karoo Eremomela. Interesting waders such as Kittlitz's and Chestnut-banded Plover as well as African Black Oystercatcher and a host of waterbirds such as White-breasted, Bank, Cape, and



Crowned Cormorants, Maccoa Duck, Cape Shoveler, Grey-headed Gull, and Little Grebe (Dabchick) can also be found here.

Set along Namibia's spectacularly scenic coast, the seaside town of Swakopmund is known for its wide-open avenues, colonial architecture, and its surrounding otherworldly desert terrain. Founded in 1892 as the main harbor for German South West Africa, Swakopmund is often described as being more German than Germany. Now a seaside resort town, Swakopmund is the capital of the Skeleton Coast tourism area and has plenty to keep visitors happy. The quirky mix of German and Namibian influences, adventure options, laid-back atmosphere, and cool sea breeze make it a very popular Namibian destination.

Accommodations at Pension Rapmund, Swakopmund (B,L,D)

Tues. Sept. 1 & Wed., Sept. 2 Namib-Naukluft National Park

Located in the scenic Namib-Naukluft National Park, Sossusvlei is where you find the iconic red sand dunes of the Namib. The clear blue sky contrasts with the giant red dunes to make this one of the most scenic natural wonders of Africa and a photographer's dream. This awe-inspiring destination is possibly Namibia's premier attraction, with its unique dunes rising to almost 400 meters—some of the highest in the world. These iconic dunes come alive in morning and evening light and draw photography enthusiasts from around the globe. Sossusvlei is home to a variety of desert wildlife including Oryx, Springbok, Ostrich, and reptiles. Visitors can climb “Big Daddy,” one of Sossusvlei’s tallest dunes; explore Deadvlei, a white, salt, claypan dotted with ancient trees; or for the more extravagant, scenic flights and hot air ballooning are on offer, followed by a once-in-a-lifetime champagne breakfast amidst these majestic dunes.

Birds to look out for include Namibia’s only true endemic, the Dune Lark, alongside other specialties of the area: Rufous-eared Warbler, White-throated Canary, Karoo Eremomela, Chestnut-vented and Layard’s Tit-Babbler, Karoo Scrub-Robin, and a number of lark species, including the Karoo Long-billed Lark.

Located in open desert with dunes in view, our camp is simple but lovely, and the pool offers the perfect place to cool off after a day exploring.

Accommodations at Desert Camp, Sossusvlei (B,L,D)



Thurs., Sept. 3 The Kalahari Desert

We are up early to enjoy the sunrise, then after breakfast we continue to the famed Kalahari Desert. Spreading across Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia, the Kalahari (meaning “the great thirst”) is an exceptionally beautiful living desert. The landscape is characterized by a large semi-arid sandy savannah draped over a gently rolling inland sea of sand covering most of Botswana and large parts of Namibia and South Africa. It is also the last bastion of the indigenous San people with the modern world having enveloped all the other areas they once roamed. The Namibian portion is made up of red sands covered in thin, wispy, mostly golden grass and dotted with acacia trees and wide-ranging wildlife including Gemsbok, Impala, Jackal, and Cheetah.

Birds to look out for today include the pretty, near-endemic, Rosy-faced Lovebird, White-tailed Shrike, Buffy Pipit, and a number of Southern African near-endemics: Ashy Tit, Southern Pied Babbler, Short-toed Rock-Thrush, Mountain Wheatear, Southern Ant-eating Chat, Kalahari and Karoo Scrub-Robins, Black-chested Prinia, Marico and Chat Flycatchers, Pirit Batis, Crimson-breasted Shrike, Cape Glossy and Pale-winged Starlings, Dusky and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Great Sparrow, Sociable Weaver, Scaly-feathered Finch, Lark-like Bunting, Groundscraper Thrush, Rockrunner, and the possibility of raptors, such as Martial Eagle, Booted Eagle, Tawny Eagle, African Hawk-Eagle, Pale-chanting Goshawks, and Rock Kestrels.

We celebrate tonight that we have made a grand loop journey through some of Earth’s most interesting scenery, rivaling that of our own Southwest USA. Namibia is a highly rewarding and exciting country to visit, and pairs well with our other [African journeys](#). If you prefer to stay on longer in Namibia, we can have our operator put together a private itinerary to add additional personal birding and travel.

Accommodations at River Crossing Lodge, Windhoek (B,L,D)

Fri., Sept. 4 Departures

Make your departures today at your leisure ... or better yet, pair this trip up with our Lens-Friendly Botswana tour that starts today. (B)

Cost of the Journey

Plan Ahead!

Protect yourself with Allianz Travel Insurance. As of January 2017, Naturalist Journeys pays 100% of your flight carbon offset.

Travel Information

Please plan to arrive at your convenience in Windhoek at Huseo Kutako International (WDH) at on August 25. Please note that flights will originate from the United States on August 24. Please plan evening departures on September 4.

Cost of the Journey

Cost of the 11-Day / 10-Night journey **\$3790 DBL / \$4190 SGL** from Windhoek, Namibia. This cost includes accommodations for 10 nights, all meals as specified in the itinerary, professional guide services, other park and program entrance fees and miscellaneous program expenses.

Tour cost does not include: round-trip transportation from your home city to Windhoek, optional activities, or items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone charges, gratuities for guides, lodges and drivers, or beverages from the bar.

Photo Credits

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