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Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

NAMIBIA



The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

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Welcome to the World of Big Five!

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



WINDHOEK ~ Elevation: 5658 feet Latitude: 22 34S Longitude: 017 06E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	77	74	72	68	63	57	57	62	69	73	77	78
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	3.1	3.2	3.1	1.5	0.3	---	---	---	0.1	0.5	1.1	1.6

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WEATHER

Typical of most deserts, Namibia is semi-arid with hot days and cool nights. The cold Benguela current, however, keeps the coast of the Namib Desert cool, damp, and rain-free for most of the year but it also generates thick coastal fog that may last from late afternoon until mid-morning. Rain falls inland during the summer months -- November to April. Midsummer temperatures may rise to more than 100 degrees F. But the altitude cools the nights. Winter nights can be fairly cold, but days are generally warm and pleasant.

Winters are usually mild to warm although it can become cold at night and in the early morning. Dawn temperatures may drop to freezing. Along the coast, it is cool with low rainfall and fog. Weather conditions along the coast can get quite cold and windy.

The rainy season lasts from October to April. The rest of the year is dry and cloudless with Namibia averaging 300 days of sunshine a year.

TIME ZONES

Summer: From the first Sunday in September to the first Sunday in April, Namibia is two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, GMT +2.

Winter: from the first Sunday in April to the first Sunday in September, one hour ahead of GMT, +1.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Namibia consulate.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. Once clear of customs, Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage, escort you to your hotel, and

assist with check-in formalities. International departure tax: None at this time.

NAMIBIA CUSTOMS

Duty-Free: Visitors may import duty-free 1 liter spirits, 2 liters wine, 300 ml. perfume, and 400 cigarettes/50 cigars/250 g. tobacco. There is no duty-free shopping available at Johannesburg International Airport on a flight to Windhoek. Please make sure any duty-free purchases of film, alcohol, etc. are made before arriving in Southern Africa.

Prohibited Items: Narcotics (hemp, opium, cocaine, morphine, heroin, etc.), firearms, obscene literature, pictures, or articles. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Note: Visitors should avoid purchasing diamonds and other protected resources outside licensed retail establishments. The sentence for illegal dealing in diamonds in Namibia is stiff (up to U.S. \$20,000 in fines or five years in prison) and the courts generally impose the maximum sentence. The purchase and exportation of other protected resources such as elephant ivory and other animal products may also be prohibited by Namibian, international, and / or U.S. law.

U.S. CUSTOMS

Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. There are limits on some items. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items and more information contact your nearest Customs office or write the U.S. Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.

HEALTH

Visitors to Africa should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Be prepared to take precautions against sunburn with sunscreen and lip balm.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

Malaria: There is a malaria risk for anyone traveling to Africa south of the Sahara Desert. Malaria exists

throughout the year in all areas including urban areas. Resistance to Chloroquine is confirmed. Although you will have little exposure to malaria, it is better to be cautious. **We strongly recommend that you consult your physician regarding these matters.** It is highly recommended that you obtain a prescription for a malaria precaution. The best protection against malaria is to avoid being bitten by a mosquito. Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants in the evening hours. Take along a good insect repellent and apply to all exposed skin.

Cholera: Inoculation recommended. Cholera is reported in areas of the country.

Please Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip. Prescription medicines should always be carried in their original containers in your hand luggage.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel.

For the most current information, please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Winters (June, July & August) are usually mild to warm, which call for light clothing in the middle of the day. As it can become cold at night and in the early morning, a warm sweater and jacket should be brought along. Weather conditions at the coast can be quite cold and windy, for which warm clothing, including a windbreaker, are necessary.

As no formal clothes are needed, we recommend that you keep your luggage to the basics. Bright colors and white are NOT advised and **ARMY CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORMS OR ARMY HATS ARE FORBIDDEN** (Khaki is fine). Cotton clothing and natural materials, cooler than synthetics, are recommended for hot Namibian summers. They can be bought at shops in Windhoek that specialize in lightweight safari garments.

Laundry: Laundry can be done at some camps. Skeleton Coast and Damaraland are exceptions as neither have a sufficient water supply. Most camps that do laundry charge a modest and nominal fee for this facility but others do provide this service for free. The camp staff will not, however, wash underwear because of local traditions prevailing in the country.

LUGGAGE

Please see general luggage and clothing sheet in your pre-departure materials.

LUGGAGE WHILE ON FLYING SAFARIS

As no formal clothes are needed, we recommend that you keep your luggage to the very basics. For safety and space reasons, **26 pounds is the weight limit** on luggage due to specific restrictions for light aircraft that are strictly enforced. **That 26-pound limit includes camera bag and equipment.** On light aircraft, a soft carryall (instead of a suitcase) is required with the following maximum dimensions: 32 in long by 14 in wide. Please keep in mind that the light aircraft have no baggage compartments, so all bags must be carried inside the aircraft, and space is very limited.

Note: Passengers who bring more than the allotted weight allowance may necessitate the use of an extra charter aircraft, in which case, the clients will be charged for the extra charter costs, which can be considerable. Excess baggage can be stored in Windhoek, but there may be additional charges for transporting the luggage to the airport at the end of the safari.

Additionally, a guest traveling alone who weighs 200 pounds or more, or two guests traveling together whose combined weight is 390 pounds or more, must advise us. All weight limits are due to safety factors involved in the light aircraft transfers. Please note that if these limitations are exceeded, it may be necessary to charge for an additional aircraft.

If you are using only scheduled flight services on your safari, then the weight limit is a maximum of 44 pounds (plus camera equipment within reason). Guests in Namibia are advised to store their excess luggage in Windhoek for the duration of their fly-in safari.

MONEY

Currency: The Namibian Dollar (NAD) has been introduced in note denominations of NAD200, 100, 50 and 10. Coins were also introduced in 1994 in denominations of NAD5 and 1. It is linked to the South African Rand (R) on a 1:1 basis (South African Rand =

100 cents). The South African Rand is also acceptable as currency in Namibia.

Currency exchange: Available in banks and at bureau de change. A better rate of exchange can be obtained on travelers checks than on cash.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Traveler's checks: To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in US Dollars or South African Rand.

Currency restrictions: The import and export of local currency is limited to NAD50,000. The import of foreign currency is unlimited, provided declared on arrival. Export of foreign currency is unlimited up to amount imported and declared as long as the departure is within 12 months.

Note: No limits exist for travel between Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland as these countries are members of the same common monetary area.

Tax: Namibia has a VAT tax that is between 15% and 30%.

COMMUNICATION

Language: English is the official language. Afrikaans is spoken by most people. German, Herero, Kavango, Nama and Owambo are also spoken.

ELECTRICITY

Electrical current is 220/240 volts, and outlets are round 3-pin, 15-amp type.

Power in the Camps: Camps are situated in remote areas and must generate their own electricity. Generally, each camp has a generator that runs for about 6 hours per day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon when guests are out on activities. These generators then charge batteries located at each tented room, which, in turn, provide good 12v lights all night if used sensibly. There are not any 220v or 110v power points in camp. If you need to have your video battery re-charged, we can do so while you are out on an activity, so bring a spare to use while the other is being charged. These systems are simple but perfectly functional.

FOOD & DRINK

Drinking Water: Water from hotel taps is purified and relatively safe, but may cause mild abdominal upsets. Bottled water is available and is advised for the first few weeks of the stay. Water from boreholes in the

camp is drinkable but, may be brackish. Drinking water outside main cities and towns may be contaminated and sterilization is advisable. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption.

Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are generally considered safe to eat. It is always advisable to eat carefully when away from home. To be safe, eat only well-cooked meat and fish, preferably freshly prepared and served hot. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Meat is basic to the Namibian diet, and is often served with a porridge-type dish that goes by several regional names, including *mahango* and *pap*. In restaurants, steak and chips is the dish favored by locals. Restaurants and cafés in major cities reflect the German influence, and offer a reasonable selection of local and continental cuisine. Game in all variations is a specialty of Namibia.

Vegetables are not very popular among the majority of Namibians, and, in fact, are viewed by many as the poison of the cultural imperialists. This view is changing, however, and many restaurants are offering a wider variety of foods.

Only a few cater for vegetarians. Vegetarians should be prepared for a lot of questioning about their particular eating disorder and can also expect little pieces of bacon or ham in their salad. *We hope you will remember this is only your chef trying to be kind.* *Braai*, barbecue, is the preferred way of cooking meat, and is done in the majority of households on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, when the braai becomes a social occasion.

Note: If you have food allergies or are on a special / restricted diet, please notify your travel agent or our office in advance, so that we may try to comply with your needs. Also, please advise your travel agent or our office if you have any mobility restrictions, so that we may inform our representatives accordingly. They will always strive to accommodate you to the best of their ability.

TIPPING

Tippling is at the sole discretion of the guests and is not compulsory. Service is not usually included in the bill. Provided the service is good, it is usual to tip porters, waiters, taxi drivers, room attendants, game rangers, and trackers. Tipping should only be done if you have received good service and you want to tip. Guests, however, often want to know what is appropriate, so we have included this guideline. Generally speaking, gratuities to waiters and taxi drivers should amount to around 10% of the cost of the service.

- **Ranger/Guide:** If they have done a good job, US\$15 or more per person per day.
- **Tracker:** About US\$10 or more per person per day.
- **Camp Staff:** At camps, staff usually about US\$10 per person per day to be distributed amongst the staff. The camps usually have communal tip box.
- **Pilot:** If your pilot has done a good job, about US\$10-\$15 or more per person per day.

SHOPPING

In the major centers such as Windhoek and Swakopmund, many shops specialize in attractive local products such as diamonds, semi-precious stones, curios of all types, including dolls dressed in the traditional Herero style (these are made by Herero woman), hand-carved wooden objects, beautifully fashioned jewelry, shoes made of Kudu leather, karosses (rugs made from the pelts of wild animals), and popular SWAKARA garments. Local crafts can also be bought at the Windhoek Street Market held every second Saturday. Good buys include *Herero* dolls, hand-carved wooden objects, jewelry, *karosse* rugs, liqueur chocolates made in Windhoek and Swakara garments.

A reminder: Visitors should avoid purchasing diamonds and other protected resources outside licensed retail establishments. The sentence for illegal dealing in diamonds in Namibia is stiff -- up to U.S. \$20,000 in fines or five years in prison -- and the courts generally impose the maximum sentence. The purchase and exportation of other protected resources such as elephant ivory and other animal products may also be prohibited by Namibian, international, and/or U.S. law.

DRIVING CONDITIONS

African roads are frequently rough and bumpy, and occasionally we will travel "off road" and it is possible that injuries may occur if, for example, a hidden pothole or other obstruction surfaces. This also means that much of the traveling is done on dirt roads, so conditions do become dusty.

NOTES ABOUT WILDLIFE

Numerous national park regulations govern the behavior of visitors. This is for your safety as well as the safety of the animals. Be considerate of the habitat as well. Many heavily visited parks prohibit driving off-road, but this is seldom a problem in getting up close to the animals, as there is an intricate pattern of roads throughout the parks.

Keep your head and arms in the vehicle area, don't make sudden moves or wave to try to attract

attention. The less you impact environment of the animals you want to see, the longer they will stay in your presence, and the better you'll be able to observe their natural behavior. Please keep in mind that in Africa, the animals you encounter here live and die in this land, and many are potentially dangerous to humans. Attacks by wild animals are exceedingly rare, but no one in Africa can guarantee that such incidents will not occur. Please follow all rules and regulations established by the camps and your guides and drivers. A safari is a spiritually and emotionally stimulating experience. Although many of the roads are rough and dusty, you will end each day tired but very content.

Flashlights: As the grounds of all lodges / camps in Namibia are unfenced, it is essential that you bring a small flashlight as you may encounter *wild animals* in camp at night. You should also bring a spare bulb as well as batteries as they will be difficult to obtain outside the cities. Most camps can supply a flashlight, but it is good to have your own backup.

Walking: On safari, we walk where possible, but local area and national regulations will determine the extent to which we can do this. Walking is not allowed in Etosha National Park, but is permitted in other areas. Please note that walking is at your own risk as these walks can take you close to dangerous wild animals.

Respecting Wildlife

- Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on game drives can frighten animals away.
- Never attempt to attract an animal's attention. **Do not** imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound the vehicle or throw objects.
- Please respect your driver-guide's judgment about the proximity to lions, cheetahs, and leopards. Don't insist that he take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt, or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal. **Big Five drivers are strictly prohibited from harassing or chasing animals.**
- **Never Litter!** Litter tossed on the ground can choke or poison animals and birds. Secondly, it is unsightly and ruins the experience for others.
- Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals may have become accustomed to human visitors.
- Refrain from smoking on game drives. The dry African bush ignites very easily, and a flash fire can kill countless animals.

SELECTED READING LIST

In addition to the many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, the Rough Guide, and others, here are a few other titles that might interest you. These books may be obtained through most bookstores or on the World Wide Web.

SAN (BOTSWANA, NAMIBIA, SOUTH AFRICA)

Megan Biesele, PH. D. Biesele, Kxao Royal

Surveys the history, culture, and contemporary life of the San people of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Angola, and South Africa.

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE

Andre' Brink

Acclaimed South African novelist Brink (The Rights of Desire; Devil's Valley; etc.) paints a harrowing picture of German South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia) in his latest novel, focusing on a German initiative to import hundreds of women to Africa for the colonists at the turn of the last century. Hanna X is an orphan who spends her early years in Germany trying to catch on as a domestic with a number of families, only to have the sexual advances of various libidinous husbands ruin her efforts to find a stable situation. Hanna thinks she has escaped the world of male domination when she receives permission to immigrate to South Africa, but her escape backfires. Raped and mutilated by brutal German officer Hauptmann Buhlke, she is taken to a horrific outpost known as the Frauenstein, where the abuse continues. The book's surreal, fragmentary first half, in which the events of Hanna's childhood are interspersed with the harrowing details of her arrival in Africa, is followed by a riveting second half, in which Hanna escapes the Frauenstein and tracks down Buhlke with the help of another abused woman, Katja, and a Herero tribesman, Kahapa, whom the two women rescue from a savage German farmer. The trio becomes a small vigilante posse as they journey to Windhoek to find Buhlke, and their efforts to turn the tables on the Germans succeed when they murder a small troop of soldiers and then wipe out a larger group at a garrison. The relentless violence occasionally turns Hanna into a one-dimensional character, but the imagery from this haunting novel will stay with readers, as will the frightening allure of all-consuming hatred.

THE PLACE OF STUNTED IRONWOOD TREES: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE CATTLE-HERDING HIMBA OF NAMIBIA

David P. Crandall

This is an account of the lives of a small band of cattle herders, the Himba, who live in and around the

settlement of Otutati in northwestern Namibia. The narrative chronicles the events of a single year, though within that year are found the events of a lifetime: birth, maturation, aging, death; generosity, meanness, accomplishment, failure. The author draws the reader into a human world that appears so utterly different from our own in the first decade of the twenty-first century. However, as the leading characters' lives and personal qualities, their joys, hopes, and anxieties unfold, the exoticism of their world fades and the experience of life rings strangely familiar.

LOST WHITE TRIBES: THE END OF PRIVILEGE AND THE LAST COLONIALS IN SRI LANKA, JAMAICA, BRAZIL, HAITI, NAMIBIA, AND GUADELOUPE

Riccardo Orizio, Avril Bardoni (Translator)

Over 300 hundred years ago, the first European colonists landed in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to found permanent outposts of the great empires. This epic migration continued until after World War II, when some of these tropical colonies became independent black nations and the white colonials were forced - or chose - to return to the mother country. Among the descendants of the colonizing powers however, were some who had become outcasts in the poorest strata of society and, unable to afford the long journey home, were left behind, ignored by both the former oppressed indigenous population and the modern privileged white immigrants.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century these lost white tribes still hold out, tucked away in remote valleys and hills or in the midst of burgeoning metropolises, living in poverty while tending the myths of their colonial ancestors. Forced to marry within their own group if they hope to retain their fair-skinned "purity," they are torn between the memory of past privileges and the extraordinary pressure to integrate. All are decreasing in number; some are on the verge of extinction and fighting to survive in countries that ostracize them because of the color of their skin and the traditions they represent. Though resident for generations, these people are permanently out of place, an awkward and embarrassing reminder of things past in newly redefined countries that are eager to forget both them and their historical homelands.

BUSHMAN MYTH: THE MAKING OF A NAMIBIAN UNDERCLASS, VOL. 2

Robert J. Gordon, Robert J. J. Gordon, Stuart Sholto-Douglas

Examines the image of the wild African, as created by European colonizers, artists, and scholars; and how the image has impacted the lives of the people it has been imposed upon. Gordon (anthropology, U. of Vermont) delves into the sociology of knowledge that underlies the myth, and the link between perceived role and economic class. Includes some interesting photographs.

PLACES IN THE SAND

Margaret Courtney-Clarke (Photographer)

Traveling thousands of miles across vast deserts, Margaret Courtney-Clarke has photographed the remote and seldom-seen landscapes of Africa's magnificent and delicate environment, where nature wages an ongoing struggle to survive. Places in the Sand portrays unfolding dunes blown constantly by the wind, dreamlike roads that lead nowhere, the fragile cracked ground stretching endlessly toward the horizon. Born and raised on a ranch at the edge of the Namib Desert, Courtney-Clarke's photographic work reflects an extraordinary blend of sophisticated European and ancient African cultures as well as an innate love for and instinctive understanding of the eternal beauty of the land. In Places in the Sand, she turns a nostalgic and knowing eye to the landscape, creating evocative slivers of panoramas in which earth touches sky, poetic images of abandoned shacks engulfed by sand and time, and jewel-like shots framing textures, majestic colors, and forms.

NAMIBIA: THE NATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Donald L. Sparks, December Green

Namibia, formerly South West Africa, is a vast, sparsely populated country the size of France. The last African colony to achieve independence, it represents a watershed in the African political experience. Namibia faces formidable political and economic challenges; constraints to growth and development include a lack of skilled workers, a low capital formation base, small internal markets, poor prospects for import substitution, and a potentially uneasy relationship with South Africa, its economically powerful neighbor to the south. Nevertheless, Namibia has some of the world's largest deposits of yellow cake uranium and diamonds. Its location could prove attractive for

mineral exports to the North American and Western European markets. This introduction to Namibia surveys the contemporary trends in the country's political, social, and economic development. The authors examine the lessons Namibia--which had over a decade to plan for independence--has learned from the experience of its neighbors concerning the workings of the international economic system and the subtleties of relations with South Africa. They conclude that the independent government--led by the South West Africa People's Organization--must find a pragmatic path to develop an economy with the potential to be one of southern Africa's strongest.

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QUESTION OF NAMIBIA

Laurent C. Kaela

Following the Second World War, South Africa claimed that the League of Nations mandate to administer Namibia had lapsed with the dissolution of that organization, and that it was within its power to annex it. It rejected UN efforts to have the territory placed under its trusteeship. This marked the beginning of the intractable dispute over the international status and independence of Namibia. This book analyses the role of the international community through the UN and other organizations in the search for a settlement. It gives attention to the efforts of the Western Contact Group and the people of Namibia themselves, and shows how conditions for a settlement ultimately emerged. Finally, it outlines Namibia's major post-independence challenges.