



APEX
EXPEDITIONS



Namibia

September 7 – 20, 2016





This image and cover: © Jonathan Rossouw

Expedition Overview

As the driest country south of the Sahara, Namibia showcases the extraordinary fusion of an unforgiving land with a unique, thriving ecosystem. The scarcity and unpredictability of rainfall has shaped a remarkable living landscape of unparalleled beauty, contrasts and intrigue. Celebrated for its astonishing scenery, abundant wildlife and fascinating cultures, this desert-dominated country offers a startling array of experiences. Observe wildlife-packed waterholes in Etosha National Park; track desert-adapted elephant within the breath-taking rockscapes of Damaraland; encounter one of the world's last, true nomadic tribes, the Himba; breathe in the solitude of the Skeleton Coast; behold the arresting beauty of the Namib's towering sand dunes; and star-gaze under bejeweled night skies. No longer a forgotten corner of the continent, Namibia is gathering well-deserved recognition as one of Africa's most sought-after travel destinations.



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Photos: (Cover) Gemsbok, Waterhole in Etosha National Park, Himba woman.





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Itinerary

Wednesday, September 7: Windhoek

Arrive in Windhoek and transfer to the *Hotel Heinitzburg* for welcome drinks and dinner.

Thursday, September 8: Okonjima

Depart Namibia's capital and drive north to the internationally renowned game reserve of Okonjima, nestled amongst the slopes of the Omboroko Mountains. Home to the pioneering predator-conservation project, the Africat Foundation, this 55,000-acre reserve boasts a thriving wildlife community. Using radio telemetry, we track resident Cheetah and Leopard, whilst learning of Africat's commitment to the long-term preservation of Namibia's large carnivores. The area's rich *Acacia* thornveld and broken sandstone ridges also supports a diverse avifauna, notably such highly prized Namibian endemics as Monteiro's Hornbill and Damara Rockjumper. After dark, a floodlit blind allows rare glimpses of some of the continent's most elusive nocturnal creatures, notably South African Porcupine and the irascible Ratel, or Honey Badger. Dinner and overnight at *Okonjima Bush Camp*.

Friday, September 9: Onguma Plains

After a morning game drive, we continue our journey northwards to the stunning *Onguma Plains Camp*. Strategically located at the eastern end of Etosha National Park, Onguma is our home for the next two nights and a perfect base for exploring this wildlife-rich area.

Saturday, September 10: Onguma Plains / Etosha National Park

An early start takes us into Etosha National Park, Namibia's most famous wildlife reserve. During this season, after months of little rain, the land is dry and the animals' thirst draws them to waterholes in spectacular aggregations. Our attention is focused on these scattered springs, where Southern Giraffe jostle for



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Photos: Leopard, Porcupine, Plains Zebra.



space alongside hundreds of Plains Zebra, Blue Wildebeest, Greater Kudu, Eland, stately Gemsbok, Springbok and the localized, endemic Black-faced Impala. Activity is often electrifying, as predators, large and small, patiently await timely hunting opportunities, whilst dust-bathing elephants coat themselves in clouds of white clay.

Sunday, September 11: Ongava Game Reserve

Today's adventure entails an epic transect of this iconic wildlife Mecca. As we journey westward, the concentrations of animals grow ever more impressive, with some springs literally heaving with a constant procession of life. In the late afternoon, we arrive in the 125-square-mile private reserve of Ongava, famous for its healthy population of Black Rhinoceros. Our lodge overlooks a floodlit waterhole, providing unrivalled opportunities for viewing this endangered pachyderm alongside its larger cousin, the White Rhinoceros. Dinner and overnight at *Ongava Lodge*.

Monday, September 12: Mowani Mountain Camp

The drive from the parched savanna plains of the north into the rugged Kunene Region is akin to entering an open-air geology museum, the broken landscape fashioned from 560-million-year-old Damara granites, schists and marbles. Living within this unforgiving environment are people known as the Himba, who have clung fiercely to their traditions and semi-nomadic way of life. Covering their bodies in a layer of ochre-red pig grease and sporting long, mud-encrusted dreadlocks, these striking pastoralists are amongst Africa's most intact tribal groups and we will stop en route to experience their beguiling culture. Our home for the next two nights is *Mowani Mountain Camp*, lying camouflaged within massive granite boulders. We arrive in time for sunset cocktails with unparalleled panoramic views.

Tuesday, September 13: Mowani Mountain Camp

Our morning focuses on tracking the region's famous desert-adapted elephants, herds of which frequent the dry riverbed of the Huab. Adjacent rocky hillsides are home to the scarce Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, along with agile Kaokoland Rock Hyraxes and the unusual Dassie Rat. This unique wildlife spectacle unfolds against a backdrop of dramatic topography: table mountains of multi-hued sandstone contrasting starkly with azure skies, and ancient watercourses snaking through vast tracts of wilderness. It is within this primordial landscape that the early Bushmen held dominion, etching their legends on the flat red rocks of Twyfelfontein, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. We spend the afternoon appreciating these ancient engravings, along with the country's most famous botanical oddity, the primitive *Welwitschia*.

Wednesday, September 14: Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp

An early departure takes us northwestwards, winding ever deeper into the broken wilds of the Kunene, our destination being the remote *Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp*. The camp overlooks the junction of two tributaries of the ephemeral Hoanib River, deep within the million acres of the Palmwag private concession. To the west lies a conservation area of even greater magnitude, the enigmatic Skeleton Coast National Park, and a three-night stay at Hoanib offers a rare opportunity to explore this pristine wilderness.

Thursday & Friday, September 15 & 16: Hoanib

Delve into the area's wealth of wildlife, tracking desert-adapted Lion, Elephant and Giraffe in safari vehicles and on foot, uncovering the secrets of a thriving



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Photos: Yellow-billed Hornbill, Twyfelfontein Rock Engravings, Desert-adapted Elephants.



ecosystem and experiencing the exquisite solitude of this vast realm. During our stay, we also enjoy an air-safari that showcases the splendor of the Skeleton Coast, with its alluring dune fields and rugged coastline beaten by a tempestuous Atlantic Ocean. The flight offers a birds-eye view of Cape Fur Seal colonies and sand-entombed shipwrecks.

Saturday, September 17: Walvis Bay / NamibRand Nature Reserve

Following breakfast, we bid farewell to the Skeleton Coast and take to the air, flying southward to Walvis Bay, the only natural harbor along the entire Namibian coast. Embarking on a cruise to Pelican Point, we observe the bustling seal colony and keep an eye out for pods of endemic Heaviside's Dolphins, all whilst enjoying a feast of champagne and famous local oysters.

Our afternoon ends with a scenic flight southwards along the barren coast, swinging inland to traverse the spellbinding dune sea of the Namib Desert. We touch down at *Sossusvlei Desert Lodge*, enveloped by the stark beauty of the NamibRand Nature Reserve. The world's oldest and most biodiverse desert, the Namib is also one of the darkest, and an after-dinner interpretation by a resident astronomer will reveal just why NamibRand was awarded with gold honors as an International Dark Sky Reserve.

Sunday, September 18: Sossusvlei / Wolwedans Dunes Lodge

A pre-dawn departure into Namib-Naukluft National Park, one of Africa's largest conservation areas, places us within reach of the Earth's tallest red sand dunes. These reach their apogee around the dead-end watercourse known as Sossusvlei, where seductively-sculpted lines and dream-like contrasts of color and shadow make for a photographer's Utopia. Add to the perfection of this otherworldly landscape, herds of Springbok, statuesque Gemsbok, and Ostrich families wandering amidst fields of golden grasses. We return to the lodge for a late lunch, before an interpretive journey southwards through NamibRand to our final destination of *Wolwedans Dune Lodge*.

Monday, September 19: Wolwedans Dunes Lodge

Explore this truly breathtaking area in search of a charming array of diminutive desert-adapted denizens such as *Tenebrionid* beetles, White Lady Spiders, Namaqua Chameleons and Namib Golden Moles that bring to life the secrets of survival in this waterless world. Namibia's only true avian endemic, the handsome Dune Lark, is easily spotted scurrying between tussocks of Bushman grass. Although NamibRand is also home to healthy numbers of Gemsbok, Red Hartebeest, Springbok, Aardwolf and Bat-eared Fox, the game-viewing here is often eclipsed by the expansive vistas of pastel-yellow grasses, craggy mountains and an endless sea of red dunes. We spend this last day breathing it all in, one last time.

Tuesday, September 20: Windhoek / Depart

Following breakfast, board your return flight to Windhoek, in time for independent international connections.



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Photos: Oysters, Quiver Tree, Namaqua Chameleon, Sossusvlei Dunes.



Your Expedition Leader



Marco Tonoli

Marco organised his first expedition into the Drakensburg Mountains at the age of 13 for a group of friends, which ultimately led to an unquestionable love of exploring and sharing the natural world. As soon as he was of legal age, he was on the first plane out of his home country, South Africa, to discover the cultures and environments of the Middle East, Far East and Europe. This love of the world's wilderness areas and the people within it, led him to pursue what turned out to be an adventurous 16-year career as a naturalist guide throughout Southern and East Africa.

His love of ethology and species adaptations, and their survival in harsh and extreme habitats took him to the Kalahari Desert, where he led and trained a team of specialist guides, as well as lived and worked closely with the region's best trackers. In due course he developed a passion for the art and science of tracking, conducting desert Black Rhino walking safaris for the next four years.

Marco took a small break from guiding to study wildlife filmmaking and photography in the pursuit of documenting the natural world, which has allowed him opportunities to work on productions by National Geographic and Discovery Channel, as well as having images appear in notable natural history publications throughout the world.

"Marco is simply one of the most knowledgeable guides I've ever come across, and I've come across quite a few! I highly recommend Marco to anyone wanting guiding of the highest caliber."

– Alex W., United Kingdom



Expedition Details

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\$16,970 Per Person Rate

\$19,320 Solo Rate

14 Days Trip Length

12 Guests Group Size

Windhoek / Windhoek Start/End

Included

Apex Expeditions' rates include all accommodations; all meals, activities and excursions as described in the itinerary; air within Namibia, as noted in the itinerary; services of one Apex Expedition leader for every six guests and local guides throughout the itinerary; local beer & wines at lunch & dinner; all gratuities; airport transfers; permits and entrance fees; all taxes.

Not Included

Costs not included in the price of your Apex expedition include travel to and from start and end point of trip; premium brand drinks and liquor; travel insurance (Trip Cancellation and Interruption, as well as Emergency Medical and Evacuation insurance, are highly recommended); airport departure taxes; excess baggage fees; passport and/or visa fees; items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, souvenirs, etc.); and independent travel arrangements pre- or post-trip.

Payments & Terms

20% of the trip cost will confirm your place on the expedition. The final balance is due 150 days prior to departure. All prices are quoted in U.S. dollars and must be paid in U.S. dollars. Per person pricing is based on double occupancy. The Solo Rate is paid by participants who specifically request single accommodations and is subject to availability. If you are traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate of the same gender. However, if a roommate is not available, the published Solo Rate will be charged. Upon confirming your reservation you will be required to pay the published Solo Rate, if we are able to pair you with a roommate, the difference will be refunded at the time that the final trip payment is due for all participants. Note that solo accommodations are limited and cannot always be guaranteed throughout. For our full set of Terms & Conditions, please visit our web site at www.apex-expeditions.com.

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Reservation Form

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Person 1: (Primary Contact)

Passport Name: _____

Preferred Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Details:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____ Country: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Double Solo

Person 2: (If applicable and at same address, otherwise please submit a second Reservation Form.)

Passport Name: _____

Preferred Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Deposit Information:

- My deposit check is enclosed (20% of total tour fare)
 Charge my deposit to my: VISA MasterCard American Express

Card #: _____ Expires: _____ CCV Code: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

**Please return this completed form to Apex Expeditions.
E-mail: info@apex-expeditions.com or Mail: 3275 36th Ave SW, Seattle, WA 98126**

