



Natural Selections

BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS



Anchieta's Cobra

The arid, sub-Saharan African country of Namibia boasts a large number of reptiles with upwards of 250 species, 59 of which are endemic. The country's reptile-rich landscape consists of five geographical areas: the Central Plateau, the Namib Desert, the Great Escarpment, the Bushveld, and the Kalahari Desert. Over 40% of Namibia is dedicated to conservation management.

Our Namibian herping tour concentrates on the arid zones where there is a high rate of endemism but also covers a wide range of habitats, giving us the very best chances of encountering as many reptile species as possible. In contrast to more forested regions, the unique, mostly arid landscapes of Namibia are more open and un-vegetated which makes searching for reptiles throughout the year much easier and thus, more productive.

Night walks/drives as well as crepuscular herping will be a vital part of this tour to find and photograph as many nocturnal reptile species as we can.

Herping Namibia

11 Nights/12 Days

Tour Overview

Day 1: Arrive Windhoek (WDH)

Day 2: Quiver Inn Guesthouse,
Southern Namibia

Day 3: Op My Stoep Lodge, Orange
River

Day 4: Kratzplatz Accommodation,
Luderitz

Days 5 and 6: Klein-Aus Vista
Desert Horse Inn, Aus

Days 7 and 8: Desert Quiver Camp,
Sossusvlei

Days 9 and 10: Hotel Pension
Rapmund, Swakopmund

Day 11: Ameib Guesthouse,
Erongo Mountains

Day 12: Depart Windhoek (WDH).

11 Nights/12 Days Itinerary

Day 1, Windhoek:

Today we meet at the airport in Windhoek and are transferred to our accommodations. Depending on the time of arrival we might spend the afternoon exploring the surrounding hills.

Main Targets: Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*), Western Barred Spitting Cobra (*Naja nigricincta*), Anchieta's Cobra (*Naja anchietae*), South African Rock Python (*Python sebae*), Namibia Rock Agama (*Agama planiceps*).

Meals: Dinner

Lodging at River Crossing Lodge

Day 2, Southern Namibia:

After breakfast we will head south towards Keetmanshoop. Along the way we will search a few wash ways and rocky areas in search of

any adders, cobras and lizards. After dinner we will do another night walk with great possibilities for a bit of starscape gazing/photography while searching for geckos and snakes.

Southern Namibia offers a harsh but beautiful environment stretching from the Orange River up to the central Namibian highlands. The region is epitomized by vast, slowly changing landscapes. The breathtakingly beautiful landscape features the Naukluft Mountains, Namib Desert dunes and the Fish River Canyon. Southern Namibia is dotted with quiver trees, covered in golden grasslands and crowned with burnt red dunes fringed by blue sky-lines.

A spectacular array of wildlife roams freely including Klipspringer, Oryx and Zebra.

Main Targets: Cape Cobra (*Naja nivea*), Black Spitting Cobra (*Naja woodi*), Mole Snake (*Psuedaspis cana*), plus various gecko and lizard species.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Quiver Inn Guesthouse*

Day 3, Orange River:

Rising from the beautiful Drakensberg Mountains in Lesotho, forming part of the international border between South Africa and Namibia, the Orange River is the longest river in South Africa. The Orange River Basin extends into Namibia and northern Botswana. The river snakes its way through one of Southern Africa's harshest



Namibian Rock Agama

environments bringing life to an area of sheer rugged beauty. Aside from vineyards in the desert the river also creates a mobile playground from which to explore the area. This spectacular river created the diamond dune fields along Namibia's coast, by washing diamonds downstream from the Kimberly region over millions of years.

On our way to Oranjemund we will continuously stop and search the ideal habitats for some of the special species such as Desert Mountain Adder and Nama Padloper. Depending on our time of arrival and weather conditions we will either head out into the dunes around Oranjemund in the afternoon or the next morning in search of the mega *Bitis schneideri*.

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Op My Stoep Lodge*

Day 4, Lüderitz:

As we continue to Lüderitz we will have a chance to see Namibia's feral horses in the desert. There are several species we can come across along the way. A drive out to the peninsula will add a few endemics. Depending on the weather we will embark on night walks during both evenings.

Sandwiched between the rugged and stark Atlantic Coast and the arid desert of Namibia, the town of Lüderitz is located in an incredible unique geographical setting. This seaside town is something of an anomaly frozen in time – a piece of 19th-century Bavaria bordering the pinkish sand dunes of the Namib Desert. Lutheran churches, German bakeries, and colonial buildings boasting German art nouveau architecture are dotted about the settlement, while its windswept beaches are home to flamingos, ostriches, seals, and penguins. The nearby ghost town of Kolmanskop, which has been taken over by the desert dunes, is another

Zebra Cobra



fascinating must-see attraction, located approximately 10 kilometers from Luderitz central, along with the herd of wild desert-adapted horses near the small town of Aus.

Main Targets: Many Horned Adder (*Bitis cornuta*), Dwarf Beaked Snake (*Dipsina multimaculata*), Meyer's Blind Legless Lizard (*Typhlosaurus meyeri*), Desert Lizards, Sand Lizards and various geckos including Namib Giant Ground Gecko (*Chondrodactylus angulifer namibensis*).

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Kratzplatz
Accommodation*

Days 5 and 6, Aus:

Perched above the plains of the Namib Desert in the rocky Aus Mountains, the small village of Aus lies at the heart of phenomenal botanic diversity. Aus serves as an excellent base from which to see the area's major attraction: the feral horses of the Namib Desert, which run wild and free in the

sparsely vegetated plains. Visitors can gain insight into the Succulent Karoo by visiting beautiful Gondwana Sperrgebiet Rand Park, home to the most biodiverse desert in the world.

Today we head through changing landscapes towards the Namib Desert. The area is home to a host of endemic specials. We will spend our days looking for Nama Padloper, Desert Mountain Adder, Many-horned Adder, Knobel's Agama and Girdled Lizard. Some more night work will hopefully provide new species for the list.

Main Targets: Cape Coral Snake (*Aspidelaps lubricus*), Cape Cobra (*Naja nivea*), Black-spitting Cobra (*Naja nigricollis*), Beetz Tiger Snake (*Telescopus beetzii*), Horned Adder (*Bitis caudalis*), Bug-eyed House Snake (*Boaedon mentalis*), Montane Thick-toed Gecko (*Pachydactylus montanus*), Giant Ground Gecko (*Chondrodactylus angulifer*), Spotted Barking Gecko (*Ptenopus garrulus maculatus*), Jordan's and Karoo Girdled Lizards (*Cordylus jordani* and *Karusasaurus polyzonus*), Ground Agama (*Agama aculeata*), Southern Rock Agama (*Agama atra*), Bushmanland Tent Tortoise (*Psammobates tentorius verroxii*), Namaqua Chameleon (*Chamaeleo namaquensis*).

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Klein-Aus Vista Desert
Horse Inn*

Days 7 and 8, Sossusvlei:

Today will mainly be a travel day as we head to Sossusvlei, which is home to some of the biggest dunes in the world as well as the famous Deadvlei.

We will leave early and have a few stops en-route to stretch the legs while searching any appealing habitats. We will have two nights and a full day to explore and photograph the area while we search for some more of the Namib's specials. We will do night walks on both nights.

Located in the scenic Namib-Naukluft National Park, Sossusvlei is where you will find the iconic red sand dunes of the Namib. The clear blue skies contrast with the giant red dunes to make this one of the most scenic natural wonders of Africa and a photographer's heaven. This awe-inspiring destination is possibly Namibia's premier attraction, with its unique dunes rising to almost 400 meters - making them 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 a variety of 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.

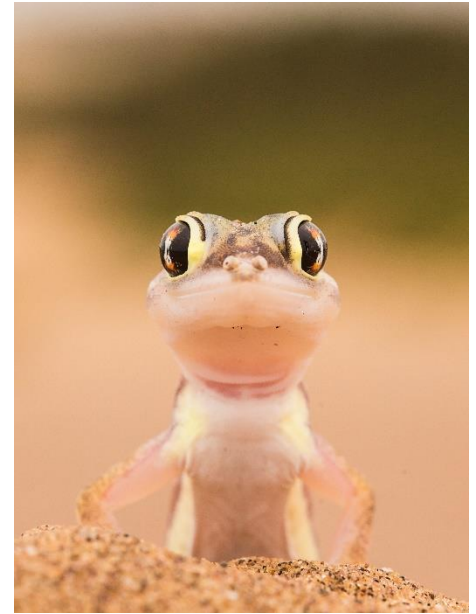
As there is no accommodation specifically at Sossusvlei, visitors to this desert wilderness are likely to end up staying at Sesriem, 65 kilometers away, where camps and lodges serve as a base from which to explore the dunes. Sesriem Canyon, a deep chasm carved through the rocks by water, is a striking natural feature of the area that is best explored on foot. Stony walls rise up sharply on both sides of the canyon, while birds roost in its crags and lizards dart along the ledges. The canyon's name was coined when early settlers used it as a water source, using six lengths of leather ('ses riem – six thongs) tied together to lower buckets into the water at the base of canyon.

Main Targets: Peringuey's Adder (*Bitis peringueyi*), Wedge-snouted Desert Lizard (*Meroles cuneirostris*), Brain's Blind Legless Lizard (*Typhlosaurus braini*), Koch's Barking Gecko (*Ptenopus kochi*), Namib web-footed Gecko (*Pachydactylus rangei*) and Sossusvlei Gecko (*Pachydactylus etultra*).

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Desert Quiver Camp*

Days 9 and 10, Swakopmund:

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



Namib Web-footed Gecko

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. Visitors can look forward to a number of exciting activities including: quad biking, horse riding, paragliding, fishing, sightseeing and fascinating desert tours.

The drive to the central coast should take about 5-6 hours including stops. We will have the opportunity to see the Welwitschia, a dinosaur plant in the Namib which is the country's national plant. A full day in the Swakop area should mop up a good host of exciting reptiles. Depending on the weather we will do night walks on both nights.



Aloes along the moonscape

Main Targets: Peringuey's Adder (*Bitis peringuey*), Horned Adder (*Bitis caudalis*), Namib Sand Snake (*Psammophis namibensis*) various endemic Geckos (*Pachydactylus* sp. / *Ptenopus* sp. / *Chondrodactylus* sp.), Namaqua Chameleon (*Chameleo namaquensis*) as well as Day Geckos (*Rhoptropus* sp.).

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Hotel Bambu*

Day 11, Erongo Mountains:

Leaving the coast behind us we will travel towards the Erongo Mountains. Depending on which species we still need we will stop in various habitats along the way in search of these.

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 wilderness serves as one of Namibia's most popular places, attracting visitors with its spectacularly scenic

landscapes, magnificent caves and rock painting sites, and its impressive array of wildlife species. These include, among others: rhino, elephant, cheetah, leopard, giraffe, wildebeest, impala, kudu, warthog, mountain zebra, oryx, eland, springbok and over 200 species of birds.

Main targets: African Rock Gecko (*Afroedura africana*), Giant Plated Lizard, Black-lined Plated Lizard (*Gerrhosaurus nigrolineatus*), Western Giant Plated Lizard (*Matobosaurus maltzahni*), Two-coloured Gecko (*Pachydactylus bicolor*), Zebra Cobra (*Naja nigricincta*), Anchieta's Dwarf Python (*Python anchietae*).

*Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
Lodging at Ameib Guesthouse*

Day 12, Departure:

After breakfast and a final walk-about we will drop you off at the airport for your departing flight. Please be sure to book a late departing flight. Alternatively, we can book another night in

Windhoek should you wish to depart the next day.

Meals: Breakfast

Included in this itinerary:

Accommodations and meals as per above itinerary, 4x4 Safari vehicle & fuel, Namibian Naturalist Guide, daily mineral water while travelling, all entrance fees, airport transfers, tourism, government and conservation levies and taxes.

Not Included:

International flights, visa expenses, personal items such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, gift shop, laundry, etc. are not included.

Travel insurance:

We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. In the event that you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.



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