



DRIVE NAMIBIA

Marilyn Tromp is Audley's Namibia Specialist and grew up in Namibia, here she picks her favourite route for exploring the country by road

When I leave London Gatwick late at night in the pouring rain, Namibia seems a long way away. Waking up the next morning I look

out of the plane window and see, well, nothing really. Miles of wilderness and desert stretch beneath me and in the early morning light everything is pale yellow. There is not a town, not a manmade structure, nothing. Coming in to land the pale desert takes form. I can see rocky outcrops, immense grass plains and once (just the once) I've actually seen a family of kudu running from the roar of the engines. Windhoek Airport is small, the air is warm and I'm into my car and onto the road. Signs depict crossing warthogs and antelope, there's rarely a car in sight.

Namibia is easy and enjoyable to drive around. Windhoek is an ideal place to start as it is one of Africa's beautiful cities. Streets are wide and quiet, the air is clear and the pace of life is slow. From Windhoek my favourite route takes me straight to the dunes. I always recommend driving early in the morning. It is cool, you often see ostrich, baboon and kudu near the roads and you have the whole day to meander on your way. Little Kulala is the place to stay in the desert, located in a petrified forest of trees and with dunes in the distance. There are guides who take you on 4WD trips into the dunes and in the heat of the day the small pool is lovely.

From the dunes the place to head for is Swakopmund, a tiny colonial town on the coast. I recommend staying in the centre as you're within easy reach of the beach and the restaurants. The Tug is a favourite and the place to eat lobster, crayfish and Skeleton Coast mussels. To work up

an appetite a kayak trip to the seal colony at Pelican Point is a must. No experience is needed and you can spend a few hours paddling with Cape fur seals from the five-hundred strong colony.

Leaving the coast the next stop is Damaraland. This is a wild and rugged area where desert elephant and black rhino roam. Doro Nawas is a new community run camp, ideal as a base for exploring. You set out to track wild game with the people who know it best. Approaching rhino on foot is not something you forget.

Etosha is always a highlight, here Ongava Lodge is my favourite place. Built on a kopje, lots of curious tree squirrels scamper around the lodge and at night the eyes of bushbabies can be found with the light of a torch. With a waterhole below the camp and views of the Ondundozonanandana Hills in the distance, you could sit all day and not leave camp. Game drives take you into Etosha for long lazy days with picnics by waterholes.

From Etosha it is due south back to Windhoek. An overnight at Ozombanda Guestfarm is the perfect end to the trip. Volker, the farmer, greets you like a long lost friend. Lazing around the large pool in the farmhouse garden is relaxing before a drive on the farm to see Richard and Jean, the pair of breeding bateleur eagles named after two Audley guests. As they circle in the clear sky I wonder why I am leaving. Fortunately, as Audley's Namibia expert, I know it won't be long before I return.

Marilyn Tromp
Namibia Specialist.

FACT FILE

Driving around Namibia is well within the bounds of any confident driver. Detailed directions are provided and the roads are quiet. Air Namibia flies directly to Windhoek from London Gatwick three times a week. A 14-night self-drive itinerary costs from £2,150 per person based on two people travelling. For further details please call Marilyn on 01869 276 271.





2



3

- 1 Dunes at Sossusvlei
- 2 Little Kulala
- 3 The pool at Ongava Lodge

WEB PLUS

audleytravel.com/drivenamibia
 To discover more about driving itineraries in Namibia, visit our website
audleytravel.com/drivenamibia