

# The Dunes of So



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TOWERING RED SAND DUNES curve sensuously around the ephemeral Tsauchab River in Southern Namibia, creating a photographer's paradise and a place of spectacular beauty. Over centuries a path has been carved through the dunes by the seasonal river's fruitless search for a route to the coast. Unable to bypass the silently shifting hills, the river, when in flow, spreads into pans in an area known as Sossusvlei, the dead end marsh.

Apricot at sunrise and crimson at sunset, the sand here is coloured by iron oxide and ranges from vivid hues of pink to orange, with the oldest dunes an intense red. Nearby, other vleis (valleys or pans) are equally beautiful. Dead Vlei with its silver floor and skeletal trees, and Hidden Vlei with its dusty acacias are well worth a visit.

This area boasts some of the highest dunes in the world, many of them over 200 metres, with the famous 'Big Daddy' dune a whopping 380 metres. One of the most iconic and photographed dunes, however, is the spectacular Dune 45, named because it lies 45 kilometres past Sesriem, the gateway to the dunes and Sossusvlei itself. Its simple but arresting shape has fascinated many visitors and resulted in some of the most memorable desert images. At only 80 metres, the temptation to climb this dune is almost irresistible, the quickly disappearing footsteps a reminder to all of the transient nature of this landscape.

Take the time to walk through the dunes and you will soon realise that the desert here is far from lifeless. The tracks of tok tokkie beetles criss-cross the sand, shovel-snouted lizards dart into nara bushes and you may even see a wildcat in the distance.



# ssusvlei



## ICON *facts*

- ★ The area of Sossusvlei is located in the southern part of the Namib Desert in the Namib-Naukluft National Park.
- ★ The sand is thought to have originated in the Kalahari to the east, between three and five million years ago.
- ★ The entire dune sea covers over 32,000 square kilometres of western Namibia.

## FACT *file*

A classic 14 day self-drive trip to Namibia including Sossusvlei, Swakopmund, Damaraland and Etosha National Park costs from £2,875 per person including international flights, airport taxes, accommodation and a hire car with full insurance cover. For more information please contact our Namibia specialists on 01993 838 525.

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