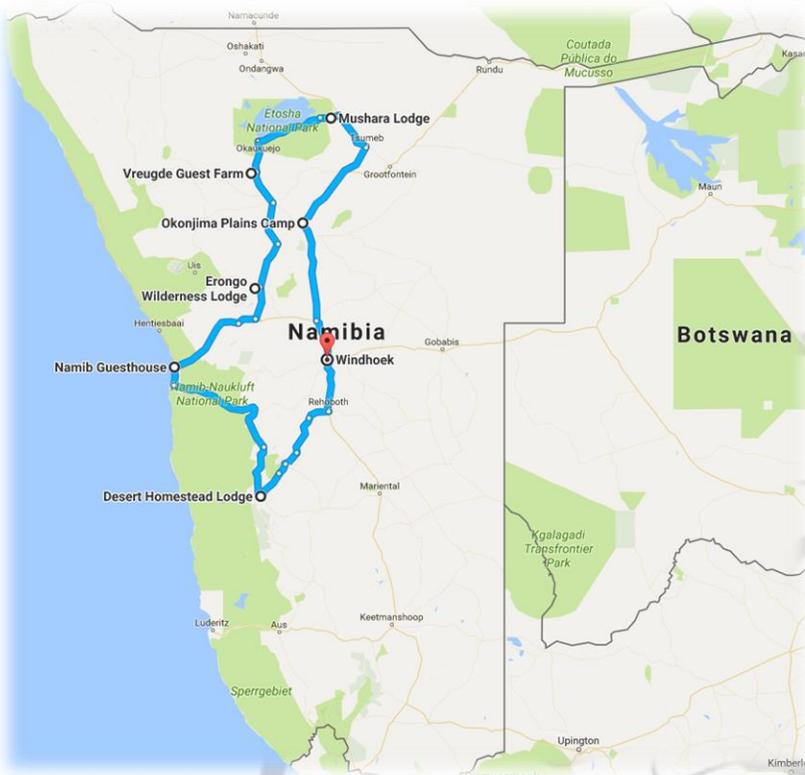




Central Namibia – The gleaming Glossy Starling



Travel through Central Namibia! Experience the changing colours of the Sossusvlei dunes as the sun goes by, the Namib Desert with its endless landscape and the unique wildlife of the Etosha National Park.

Day 1: Airport – Windhoek

After your arrival at the Windhoek International Airport, you will start your Namibia Tour by driving to Windhoek. Spend the day at leisure – you might want to go on a city tour.

Windhoek is the capital and largest city of the Republic of Namibia. It is located in central Namibia in the Khomas Highland plateau area, at around 1 700 metres above sea level. The population of Windhoek in 2011 was 322 500 and grows continually due to an influx from all over Namibia. The town developed at the site of a permanent spring known to the indigenous pastoral communities. It developed rapidly after Jonker Afrikaner, Captain of the Orlam, settled here in 1840 and built a stone church for his community. However, in the decades thereafter multiple wars and hostilities led to the neglect and destruction of the new settlement such that Windhoek was founded a second time in 1890 by Imperial German army Major Curt von François. Windhoek is the social, economic, and cultural centre of the country. Nearly every Namibian national enterprise, governmental body, educational and cultural institution is headquartered here.

Notable landmarks are: Parliament Gardens, Christ Church (Lutheran church opened in 1910, built in the gothic revival style with Art Nouveau elements.), Tintenpalast (Ink Palace - within Parliament Gardens, the seat of both chambers of the Parliament of Namibia. Built between 1912 and 1913 and situated just north of Robert Mugabe Avenue), Alte Feste (built in 1890 and houses the National Museum), Reiterdenkmal (Equestrian Monument - a statue celebrating the victory of the German Empire over the Herero and Nama in the Herero and Namaqua War of 1904–1907), Supreme Court of Namibia Built between 1994 and 1996 it is Windhoek's only building erected post-independence in an African style of architecture.

Overnight in the Olive Grove Guesthouse

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Accommodation:	Olive Grove Guesthouse
Room type:	Luxury
Meals included:	Breakfast
Description:	Olive Grove is a small upmarket accommodation establishment situated close to Windhoek city centre in a quiet, peaceful area. Big Sky's first property in Windhoek and bordering The Olive Exclusive, the guesthouse takes homely atmosphere to a different level. Recently completely refurbished, each room has been decorated and painted with new colour schemes allowing a different feel, but with the same elegant and simplistic emphasis on décor. The newly renovated, open-plan kitchen allows guests to see how meals are prepared, while they enjoy a drink in the lounge. The menu was also reinvented and is now fully a la carte, quite unique for a guesthouse. Home-style food is rounded off with great presentation, pushing up the level of the guesthouse dining experience. The upper deck has been revamped into a private dining corner, with two Moroccan-style sections, for guests to get comfy on the large pillows and enjoy the ambience and view from the top. The on-site Wellness Room offers a selection of professional services, to assist guests on their journey towards inner and outer well-being. Whilst each of the ten rooms and one suite cater for every need of the most discerning traveller, the emphasis remains one of simplicity and elegance.
Other:	Swimming pool, restaurant, WiFi, laundry service, air-condition, safe, TV, VISA and MASTER



Day 2: Windhoek – Sossusvlei

The journey leads you to the fascinating dunes in the Sossusvlei area. Enjoy a scenic drive via the Spreetshoogte Pass to Solitaire.

Spreetshoogte Pass (Afrikaans: Spreetshoogtepas, literally English: Spreeth's Peak Pass) is a mountain pass in central Namibia, connecting the Namib Desert with the Khomas Highland by traversing the Great Escarpment, a geological feature of much of the southern part of the African continent. With gradients between 1:4.5 and 1:6 it is the steepest pass in Namibia, as well as the one straddling the biggest elevation difference, descending almost 1,000 metres (3,300 ft) within 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) of road. The top of the pass features a rest place from which there is a spectacular view into the adjacent Namib. The pass was erected during World War II by farmer Nicolaas Spreeth, after whom it is named. Spreeth owned the farm Ubib just at the foot of the escarpment. Whenever goods were delivered to his farm they would be dropped at a bus stop at farm Namibgrens (English: Namib border) on top of the mountain. To gather them the choice was



to either travel via Remhoogte Pass approximately 30 kilometres (19 mi) southwards, or to trek uphill along existing Zebra paths. Spreeth decided to do the latter, fortifying the path with quartzite rocks whenever he undertook the journey. Soon the bright white rocks formed a line that could be spotted from a distance. Spreeth even catered for motor vehicles (not very strong at that time), placing long, flat patches of road ahead of every steep ascent. He built the pass literally with his own hands. To flatten obstacles, he used dynamite.

Now still continue towards south till you reach the lodge.

Overnight in the Desert Homestead Lodge

Accommodation:	Desert Homestead Lodge
Room type:	Standard
Meals included:	Breakfast / Dinner
Description:	The Desert Homestead lies approx. 32km southeast of Sesriem. The wide grassy valley is sheltered by the Nubib, Tsaris and Naukluft mountains with a view reaching the distant dunes of the Namib Desert in the west. In this exquisite position, we offer simple but stylish accommodation in thatched chalets which were designed with the fragile beauty of this remarkable environment in mind. The Desert Homestead will ensure you an unrivalled respite from the desert extremes. Tranquil surroundings, Alfresco dining, delectably fresh farm cuisine, refreshing dips in the pool, stunning sunsets and sunrises are the basic pleasures at our lodge. The living areas of the main lodge are all open plan, encouraging guests to move around freely. The most prominent feature is the well sheltered veranda where you can have a leisurely breakfast, lunch and dinner, candle-lit even on windy evenings. Inside, you will find a cosy lounge with ethnic African decoration and comfortable leather sofas. Satellite TV is available in a separate room and internet facilities for guests are available in the adjacent curio shop. The bar is attended by a friendly, well-educated and communicative barkeeper. Desert Homestead offers creative farm style cuisine with fresh vegetables from our desert gardens.
Optional activities:	Sossusvlei excursions, Naukluft excursions, sundowner drive, horse ride outs, walking trail, quad biking, hot air ballooning, scenic flights, wine tasting to Neuras Estate.
Others:	Swimming pool, WiFi, laundry service, air-condition, safe, mosquito net, VISA and MASTER



Day 3: Sossusvlei

Today you can explore the Sossusvlei, surrounded by the world's highest dunes.

The sand dunes of Sossusvlei in the Namib Desert are thought to be the highest dunes in the world. The best time to view Sossusvlei is close to sunrise and sunset, when colours and shades change constantly, offering a photographer's dream. The midday heat is intense and best spent

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in the shade. 'Vlei' is the Afrikaans word for a shallow depression or pan, surrounded by spectacular red dunes, sometimes fills with water. The pan only has water on rare occasions, during exceptional rainy seasons, when the Tsauchab River flows into this pan. The Sossusvlei is mostly a dry vlei except in good rainy season. The sand-dunes at Sossusvlei are some 60km from the Sesriem gate (the entrance to the park) and the drive takes about an hour. The area also hosts various vleis, such as the Naravlei, so called because of the countless cucumber-like melons (a vital source of nourishment for many desert creatures, including man) growing around the edge of the pan. Dead Vlei boasts dead camelthorn trees, some being over 800 years old. Out of view from the 2x4 car park, tucked behind a dune, is Hiddenvlei. Many species of bird shelter here on both dead and live camelthorn trees.

One would think that nothing can survive in temperatures that surpass 40°C during the day and fall to below freezing at night, but life manages to exist under the sand. Tiny tracks at the base of the dunes give away the presence of game. Examples are the tok-tokkie beetle, one of over 200 species of tenebrionid living in the Namib Desert, lizards and reptiles and mole, surviving on droplets of water formed by fog. Even jackal, springbok, ostrich and oryx also survive in this area. The Sesriem Canyon derives its name from the fact that early Afrikaner trekkers had to use six ('ses') leather thongs ('riem') so that their buckets could reach the water far below. Because it is so deep and sheltered, it often holds water well into the dry season.

Overnight in the Desert Homestead Lodge

Day 4: Sossusvlei - Swakopmund

Your journey leads you to the coast line of Namibia. Today you will drive through the barren Namib Desert with its unique eco-system. You can visit the ancient Welwitschia plants and the moonlandscape.

The Namib Desert, the world's oldest desert (43 million years), covers just under 50 000km² and incorporates the Namib Naukluft Park, a section of the diamond area to the south and the Skeleton Coast to the north, which was recently proclaimed as the Dorop Park. It includes the Swakop River and Kuiseb River Canyons, which are dry rivers, except in exceptional good rainy seasons. The Namib Desert is host to a fascinating array of bizarre plants and animals who all adapted to the desert conditions, surviving mostly from the fog from the coast in sand dunes and vast gravel plains. A desert tour with an expert guide, who shows and explains its inhabitant's magical ways of survive, is well worth it (please book this tour with us in advance). An amazing variety of game can also be seen in different parts of the desert: various species of antelopes such as oryx and springbuck and a multitude of insects, vertebrae, invertebrate etc.

Overnight in the Namib Guesthouse

Accommodation:	Namib Guesthouse
Room type:	Standard
Meals included:	Breakfast
Description:	The Namib Guesthouse is a stylish and tranquil accommodation haven in Namibia's premiere holiday destination, Swakopmund. Surrounded by breath-taking beauty, Namib Guesthouse offers all the creature comforts of modern living, spacious and sunny rooms, scrumptious breakfasts, and warm hospitality. Namib Guesthouse has 7 double bedrooms and 1 family suite. Elegantly furnished and spacious, all rooms have been thoughtfully designed to make the most of the exquisite views and the warm African sun.
Others:	TV, coffee station, WiFi, hairdryer, laundry service, VISA, Master Card und AMEX



Day 5: Swakopmund

Enjoy the day in leisure.

Swakopmund (German for "Mouth of the Swakop River") is the ideal holiday destination of Namibia which lies on the west coast only 350km from Windhoek.

Swakopmund was founded in 1892 as the main harbor for German South-West Africa, and a sizable part of its population is still German-speaking today. Boats were offloaded at Swakopmund's landmark, the jetty. However, the natural potential of Swakopmund as a holiday resort was recognized, and this potential has subsequently been developed. Today tourism-related services form an important part of the town's economy. This little town is rich in beautiful German colonial architecture/buildings, e.g. the beautiful old train station which was converted into a hotel, the prison, the Woerman House which used to be the head office of the Woermann Line (colonial shipping line) and now houses the public library and shops, the Light House, the Jetty which now houses a restaurant, just to mention a few. Swakopmund has an excellent museum on the history of Namibia / Southwest Africa.

Swakopmund has a lot to offer which include attractions like: the National Marine Aquarium, the Crystal Gallery, the Martin Luther Steam locomotive and "things to do" like fishing, skydiving and quad biking, dune riding, ballooning, camel riding and excellent shopping possibilities.

Overnight in the Namib Guesthouse

Day 6: Swakopmund – Erongo

You will enjoy another hearty breakfast at the guesthouse, before you continue your journey via Usakos into the Erongo Mountains. En-route you might want to visit a SAN living museum to explore the traditional life of the SAN people.

The stunning Erongo Mountains are located in Damaraland, west of the town of Omaruru, and represent a 130-million-year-old volcanic complex of about 30km in diameter. The variety of rock and landscape formations in the Erongo mountains are every nature lovers, photographers and artists dream, with its spectacular, magical and dramatic light changes and contrasting light, transforming the mountain backdrop, granite flats and gigantic boulders into magical colours, especially early evenings and during sunset, the mountain range into magical colours. The mountain range also offers plentiful game, wildlife and birds. Precious stones are mined in the Erongo, especially aquamarine. The famous Phillips Cave is also situated here, known for its rock and cave paintings, which are protected heritage sights. The highest elevation surveyed is "Hohenstein" in the southwest of the mountain with 2 319m height, the Erongo Mountains in 2 216m height, and the highest human settlement in Namibia is situated here at 1 792m height.

Overnight in the Erongo Wilderness Lodge

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Accommodation:	Erongo Wilderness Lodge
Room type:	Standard
Meals included:	Breakfast / Dinner
Description:	There is a special wilderness area in Namibia, encircled by the Erongo Mountains where the desert, mountain, and bushveld ecosystems combine. Here, in a secluded valley, you will find the lodge in a dramatic setting of granite boulders and breathtaking views. The lodge has 10 tented chalets, built on stilts, set against towering granite formations. Each chalet has its own niche amongst the rocks, ensuring peace, privacy and exclusivity. The luxury Meru tents are pitched under steep thatched roofs for shade, and have netting across all windows and doors, allowing only the breeze to enter. The en-suite bathrooms are cunningly built around the existing rocks and trees in a very natural way. With its own private deck, bush-style mini-bar, and spectacular setting, each chalet is the perfect way to experience the lush Erongo environment.
	Set atop a separate granite hill, the restaurant and lounge also offer spectacular views of the mountain landscape. Guests are able to observe the wildlife from the outside deck at the floodlit waterhole below. With a large, central fireplace, comfortable lounge and our 'mokoro' bar, this area is as much for unwinding as it is for fine wining and dining. Languid days are spent at the adjacent swimming pool and 'relaxation' deck.
Optional activities:	walking trails, sundowner walk, nature drives, birding
Others:	Swimming pool, WiFi in reception area, laundry service, safe, coffee station, VISA and MASTER



Day 7: Erongo – Etosha National Park

You can go on an early morning guided walk, before you depart for the famous Etosha National park. On your way there, you will pass through Omaruru and Outjo.

Omaruru, a picturesque town, is situated in the centre of Namibia. This town is rich in history. It is also home to many artist and offers a yearly artist festival in September. The Omaruru river runs through the town, bordered by huge, ancient trees which add to the picture and character of the town. The name Omaruru is derived from the native word "Omaere" which is a traditional milk product. In 1871, Anders Ohlsson and Axel Eriksson established a brewery at Omaruru. Eriksson had also established a trading post, which flourished. Eriksson's business was based upon long-distance trading between southern Angola and Cape Colony. The town grew around a mission built in 1872 by Gottlieb Viehe, now a museum, and was attacked in 1904 during the Herero and Namaqua war. Captain Franke's Tower was later erected to commemorate the relief



by Hauptmann Franke's troops of the local garrison that was beleaguered by Hereo tribesmen who had risen against the German colonial presence.

Omaruru also boasts home to 3,5-hectare vineyard and Kristal Kellerei, one of only a few vineyards and wineries in Namibia.

Overnight at the Vreugde Guestfarm

Accommodation:	Vreugde Guestfarm
Room type:	Standard
Meals included:	Breakfast / Dinner
Description:	The meaning of the word "Vreugde" is joy or happiness and that is exactly what the guest farm strive to offer to their guests. The Vreugde Guest Farm is a small, friendly family business, offering accommodation that is comfortable, rustic and elegant. Situated in the heart of Namibia, just 30 minutes' drive from the Etosha National Park's Anderson Gate, "Vreugde" is a perfect stop-over where you can sit back and relax, and recapture the beauty that you have experienced on your travels through our vast and beautiful country. The guest farm offers comfortable and rustic accommodation in 1 double room, 5 twin rooms and 1 family room, all en-suite with a shower. Breakfast and dinner are served in the main farm house, but drinks can also be served either in our garden, under our grass-roofed "Lapa", around the fire, or even at our swimming pool. They are well known for their delicious Namibian farm cuisine.
Optional activities:	Farm drive, game drives into the Etosha National Park, guided walks
Others:	Swimming pool, air-condition, safe, Wifi, laundry service, VISA and MasterCard



Day 8: Etosha National Park

On your first game drive, you will get to know some of the abundant wildlife Namibia has to offer. In the vast arid space of Northern Namibia lies one of Southern Africa's best loved wildlife sanctuaries. Etosha National Park offers excellent game viewing in one of Africa's most accessible venues. Zebra and springbok are scattered across the endless horizon, while the many waterholes attract endangered black rhinoceros, lion, elephant and large numbers of antelope. Etosha, meaning 'place of dry water', is enclosed a huge, flat calcrete depression (or pan) of about 5 000km². The 'Pan' provides a great, parched, silver-white backdrop of shimmering mirages to an area of semi-arid savannah grassland and thorn scrub. The pan itself contains water only after very good rains and sometimes for only a few days each year, but is enough to stimulate the growth of a blue-green algae which lures thousands of flamingos. Etosha was first established in 1907, when Namibia was a German colony known as South West Africa. At the time, the park's original 100,000 km² made it the largest game reserve in the world. Due to political changes since

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its original establishment, the park is now slightly less than a quarter of its original area, but still remains a very large and significant area in which wildlife is protected. The salt pans are the most noticeable geological features in the Etosha national park. The main depression covers an area of about 5 000 square kilometres and is roughly 130 km long and as wide as 50 km places. The hypersaline conditions of the pan limit the species that can permanently inhabit the pan itself; occurrences of extremophile micro-organisms are present, which species can tolerate the hypersaline conditions. The salt pan is usually dry, but fills with water briefly in the summer, when it attracts pelicans and flamingos in particular. In the dry season, winds blowing across the salt pan pick up saline dust and carry it across the country and out over the southern Atlantic. This salt enrichment provides minerals to the soil downwind of the pan on which some wildlife depends, though the salinity also creates challenges to farming.

Overnight at the Vreugde Guestfarm

Day 9 und day 10: Etosha National Park

Enjoy some more game-viewing whilst driving toward the eastern part of the park. With just a little luck you will be able to see a herd of elephants, splashing in one of the few waterholes.

Elephants are the largest living land animals on Earth today. The elephant's gestation period is 22 months, the longest of any land animal. At birth, an elephant calf typically weighs 105 kilograms. They typically live for 50 to 70 years, but the oldest recorded elephant lived for 82 years. The male elephant weighs about 10,900 kg with a shoulder height of 3.96 meters. Elephants suck water up 14 litres of water into the trunk and then blow it into their mouths. The complete trunk can have up to 150,000 separate muscle fascicles, giving it strength and flexibility. Elephants are herbivores and spend up to 16 hours a day eating plants. Their diets are highly variable, both seasonally and across habitats and regions. Elephants are primarily browsers, feeding on the leaves, bark and fruits of trees and shrubs, but they may also eat considerable amounts of grasses and herbs. As is true for other nonruminant ungulates, elephants only digest approximately 40% of what they eat. They make up for their digestive systems' lack of efficiency in volume. An adult elephant consumes 140–270 kg of food a day. The average sleep time of an elephant is said to be only two plus hours per day. This is thought to be because they are so big they have to eat most of the time.

Drive to the lodge just outside the National Park.

Overnight at the Mushara Lodge

Accommodation:	Mushara Lodge
Room type:	Standard
Meals included:	Breakfast / Dinner
Description:	Located just 8 km from the Von Lindequist Gate on the eastern boundary of Etosha National Park, Mushara Lodge is an ideal overnight stop for visitors to the game reserve. The lodge consists of ten spacious chalets, one family unit, a triple room and two single rooms. The name Mushara is derived from the Purple Pod Terminalia tree which grows abundantly on the lodge grounds and in the surroundings. The thatched public area includes a small library with a selection of good books, a bar with an extensive wine cellar, an airy lounge complete with welcoming fireplace for winter evenings, a dining area and a well-stocked curio shop. Great attention has been paid to the décor, which is an eclectic blend of traditional African and modern works of art mixed with original older paintings. Ten well-spaced thatched chalets are arranged in horseshoe shape around the swimming pool. All the chalets and individual rooms are extremely spacious and equipped with air-conditioning, mosquito net, mini-bar, safe, tea and coffee station, sockets for charging storage batteries and direct telephone connection. The



bathrooms are en-suite with separate toilette. The chalets and single rooms have a shower, whereas the triple room and the family house have a shower and bath. One of Mushara's prominent features is its large bright blue swimming pool, surrounded by green lawns which are kept.

Optional activities:

AM and PM game drives into the Etosha National Park swimming pool, safe, laundry service, WiFi at reception, air-condition, mosquito net, tea and coffee station, VISA and MasterCard

Others:



Day 11: Etosha National Park – Okonjima

You will depart in the morning and drive via Tsumeb, Otavi and Otjiwarongo, till you reach the homeland of the AfriCat Foundation.

Tsumeb is the largest town in Oshikoto region in northern Namibia. Tsumeb is the "gateway to the north" of Namibia. It is the closest town to the Etosha National Park. Tsumeb used to be the regional capital of Oshikoto until 2008 when Omuthiya was proclaimed a town and the new capital. The town is the site of a deep mine (the lower workings now closed), that in its heyday was known simply as "The Tsumeb Mine" but has since been renamed the Ongopolo mine. The name Tsumeb is generally pronounced "SOO-meb". The name is not a derivative of German, Afrikaans, or English. It has been suggested that it comes from Nama and means either "Place of the moss" or "Place of the frog". Perhaps this old name had something to do with the huge natural hill of green, oxidized copper ore that existed there before it was mined out. The town was founded in 1905 by the German colonial power and celebrated its 100th year of existence in 2005. Overnight at the Okonjima Plains Camp

Accommodation:

Okonjima Plains Camp

Room type:

Standard

Meals included:

Breakfast / Dinner

Description:

The Plains Camp design honours the Okonjima cattle-farming history. In the early 1920's, Okonjima became a cattle farm and was bought by Val (VJ) & Rose Hanssen in 1970. They were well-established Brahman breeders and continued to farm cattle until the need for solutions to increasing livestock losses became pertinent and post-independence interest in Namibia as a tourist destination, escalated. In 1993, the herds of Brahman and Jersey cattle were sold, changing the face of Okonjima as well as that of Carnivore Conservation! The Barn/ Entertainment area – AKA 'The Lapa', meaning 'Gathering Place', – includes, the dining and lounge area, the pool and the curio-shop; and hosts the 3-tier accommodation facility. Plains Camp is family & wheel-chair friendly! The open, grass-plains were

‘recovered’ by removing and burning invasive Acacia-bush during 2012 and 2013, creating the plains-view, ensuring a great sunset most evenings.

Optional activities:

Game drives in an open vehicle in which we are looking for leopards, cheetahs and other game, walking trails, visit to the AfriCat Foundation

Others:

Swimming pool, safe, mini bar, coffee station, laundry service, WiFi at reception area, VISA and Master Card



Day 12: Okonjima – Windhoek

Early in the morning you can still participate on one of the activities offered by the lodge, before departing for Okahandja and Windhoek. You will then have to carry on to the Windhoek International Airport.

*** Hope to see you again soon ***