

Tour Report

Wonders of Namibia: A Photographic Safari

14 September 2024

White rhino



Elephant



Ostrich



Elephant



Compiled by Emma Healey

An exploration of the incredibly hardy wildlife that call Namibia home, despite the at times seemingly uninhabitable landscape. This trip travels through the northern circuit of Namibia, including some wildlife rich private reserves, Etosha National Park, Damaraland and the dunes of Swakopmund and Sandwich Harbour.

Day 1/2:

Saturday 14/ Sunday 15 September 2024

Travel and transfer to Epako

We arrived in the morning after our long flight and were met by Brian's smiling face at arrivals. We stocked up on coffee and got some local currency at the ATM before starting our adventure. We drove from Windhoek airport, around the edge of Windhoek town, and to our first top – Epako (meaning between the mountains/hills).

Namibia is currently in its 10th year of drought and it's clear to see the effects of this on the drive. The first area we visited outside Otjiwarongo was extremely dry. Set on the edge of a riverbed, which has been running dry for years, for those whose first visit to Africa it was, or even those who had visited various countries on the continent, this was our first time thinking 'how can things possibly survive somewhere like this?' (but definitely not our last!).

After a long drive starting on tarred roads, followed by dirt roads where we overtook a group of motorbike riders enjoying the open space, we arrived at Epako to cool towels and a lovely welcome.

We were treated to a delicious lunch overlooking the waterhole, where three white rhinos were napping and a herd of wildebeest were making the most of the water. After a little time to freshen up, we were ready for our first game drive with our driver Hendrick. Before we set off, we were introduced to the local celebrity – Oscar. Oscar is a giraffe who grew up nearby and was the bravest of his siblings, coming to the lodge to visit and make friends. He now lives wild, but visits most days when he's in the area to greet guests and keep an eye on the staff at the lodge!



Once we'd passed Oscar's initiation, we embarked on our first drive on the 11,000 hectare estate. We didn't get very far before seeing a lone male ostrich up ahead. We stopped and watched as he walked away ... then turned round and started coming towards us. As we sat there, he approached and then came quite close to the vehicle, fluffing his wings and walking around the vehicle. Hendrick said that he was an old male, who could see his reflection on the doors and was puffing up to look attractive/intimidating. It was really interesting to watch and he was a character. The proximity to the vehicle meant we could play with some interesting angles that you generally don't get with ostriches as often they can be quite far in the distance.



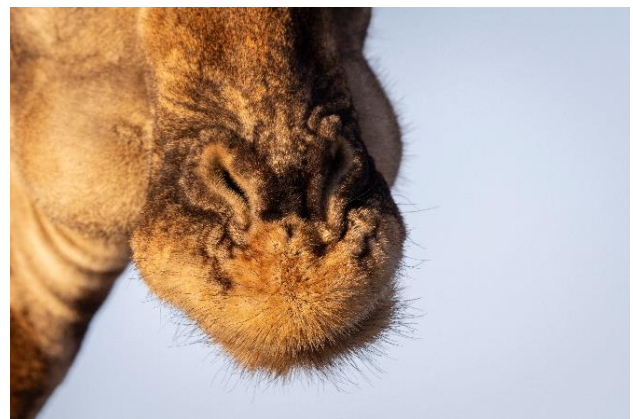
We drove further but nothing beat the highlight of the start of the drive. We were introduced to the beautiful valley in the mountains, which provides an excellent habitat for herbivores and carnivores alike. We made a few brief stops, before sundowners overlooking the valley and then returned to the lodge for dinner.

Day 3:
Epako

Monday 16 September 2024

We left early this morning for a sunrise drive, but it was quite quiet as we travelled around the lower areas of the hills, looking unsuccessfully for leopards on and around the rocks. We found a crimson breasted shrike, which are always beautiful to watch, particularly in the sandy, dry surroundings we were in. We also encountered a number of giraffe, a shy duiker and some small birds who kept us entertained.

We were met by Oscar when we got back to the lodge, which was a lovely welcome. The white rhinos were at the waterhole again and we watched a swallow-tailed bee-eater from the terrace briefly.



The staff put on a fantastic braai (BBQ) on the terrace and we sat watching the waterhole on side and the smaller wildlife, including dragonflies and agamas, that were around the swimming pool. We even had a brief visit from a viperine bark snake, which disappeared quickly into the rocks.

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

After lunch some of the group rested, while others photographed the dragonflies and agamas by the pool. Later on it was time for our next sundowner drive with Hendrick. We drove closer to the camp waterhole to see the rhino and wildebeest when we heard a pearl spotted owl nearby. We moved closer to the tree and spotted it in the high branches and noticed it had caught something, but it was quite high so we couldn't make out what it was. It quickly flew to another tree so we drove a little closer but it had hidden itself amongst lots of small branches. A small flock of Ruppell's parrots were calling angrily so we can only assume that it had taken one of their babies, unfortunately.



We continued driving, but other than some little birds including a rock thrush and a vulture sitting high in the branches of a tree, it remained quiet so we stopped for sundowners before returning to the lodge.

After a delicious dinner a few of us went out on a night drive where we saw a bat eared fox, genet and an acacia rat racing around a tree. Not great for photography but it's always interesting to see how much things change in the bush after the sun goes down.

Day 4:
Epako

Tuesday 17 September 2024

Another early morning game drive today – too early even for Oscar to be awake it seemed! We came across five giraffe as the sun came up in lovely morning light. We initially tried some backlighting but the angle of the hills didn't help us, so we drove closer for some morning portraits and to watch them feeding for a while. We came across a scrub hare, who was obviously making the most of the sunshine before heading back to bed and drove along to the sounds of the red crested korhaan's mating call. As we were trying to see where he was in the bush, he suddenly flew up and did the 'suicide dive' close to us, showing his prowess.

Driving next to one of the rocky hills, we suddenly noticed two giraffes high up on the hill. It seemed like a very incongruous place to see them and we were trying to establish how they would be able to get down. Due to the drought, often the plants and vegetation on the hills get more water so it may just be that they'd seen some tasty food and decided it was time to take up rock climbing. Spot the two giraffes...!



Around the corner were some large granite rocks and it was nice to see a large number of rock hyrax (dassies) and dassie rats sunbathing on the top of them. They were alert as ever and some decided to retreat into the safety of the shade. As we watched them, a monteiro hornbill was in a nearby tree doing its morning wake-up call and dance so we watched him for a few minutes too.

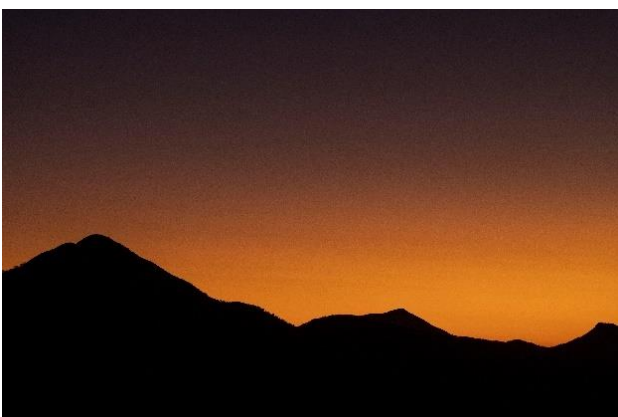
We came across a kudu kill, which Hendrick thought was from last night so we slowly drove around the vicinity to see if we could find the leopard, who had no doubt killed it, but unfortunately they'd gone for a well-deserved rest.

We stopped for a coffee after watching a herd of springbok eating the blossoms that had fallen from the acacia trees and listened to the sound of a pair of golden woodpeckers chatting.

As we had our lunch on the terrace, the waterhole was very busy. We had a visit from an African hawk eagle, a big herd of black faced impala and zebra and a troop of baboons. The baboons quickly ran along the riverbed and we heard them fighting with another troop trying to get to the water.

We left again at 16:30 and drove further from the lodge to see if we could find more herds and the predators that should be watching them. We came across some springbok, giraffes and a jackal but nothing wanted to pose for us, so we drove on to the sound of the red crested korhaans with some swallow-tailed bee-eaters swooping nearby.

We were aware that it was a harvest full moon so we were keeping an eye out and as the moon rose, we found a butter tree to use as foreground and stopped for some shots before some sundowners with a beautiful view of mountain layers.



We drove back slowly past the kudu carcass in case a leopard or brown hyena had returned, but nothing was there so we drove back slowly, seeing another scrub hare on the way.

After dinner some of us went out to photograph scorpions before heading to bed. The first ones we found were quite shy, but luckily one posed well for us with UV light and without. Photographically, the stick between it's pincers drives me a bit mad but I wasn't going to move it!



Day 5:
Epako to Onguma

Wednesday 18 September 2024

We woke to a clear blue sky this morning and the call of crimson breasted shrikes. A couple of us photographed some lovebirds having breakfast in the trees close to the lodge and said good morning to Oscar, who had come to see everyone off, before having breakfast. At around 8am we said our goodbyes and started our long drive north.



We crossed the Otavi mountains and there is a sudden change as the calcium carbonate that can be found in the soil on the other side makes it much whiter so you start to see the difference. You can particularly see it in the termite mounds, which start to be much more white/grey rather than the red/brown we'd been used to seeing.

We arrived at Onguma Bush Camp in time for some lunch overlooking the waterhole, where a group of maribou storks were holding court.

At 16:30 we met our guide, Engelbrecht, and set off for an afternoon drive on the reserve. He had heard about two lions at a waterhole, so we made our way straight there and found two lionesses resting on the other side of the water. Initially we weren't sure they were there as there were some impala looking quite relaxed, but the lionesses were not showing any signs of movement so everything seemed to just

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

carry on around them. They sat in the shade of a tree looking very relaxed and a couple of blacksmith plovers guarded a nest on the other side of the water, close to our vehicle and a scrub robin was hunting for critters in the soil. As we sat there, I saw an agama lizard sunning itself on a dry mud pile in the first rays of the sun, so we manoeuvred the vehicle back slightly so that everyone could get some nice shots of it.



The lionesses layed down and started to snooze so we decided to drive on to see what we could find. Engelbrecht had heard about a rhino sighting but they lost visual but we hoped it would come to the waterhole later so we continued on and ran into (not literally thankfully!) three young adult lions - one male and two females. Previously there had been four but one female seemed to have gone so our guide assumed maybe she had been 'taken' by a male to mate. There was also an elephant at the waterhole, but we decided to focus on the lions as the light was really nice. They walked past our vehicle and then rubbed against a tree stump before walking off into the bush.



After they left the light was already starting to fade, so we made our way back towards the waterhole we'd started at. On the way we passed a beautiful male kudu peeking out from the undergrowth. At the edge of the waterhole we found the two lionesses who had been spooked and were standing away from the waterhole where the rhino was drinking. There are only two in the reserve so we felt very lucky to see one. The lions walked away, and the rhino was having a whale of a time drinking, playing and bathing in the smaller pond - playing.



We went back to camp feeling very happy, and as we returned were told a female leopard and her cub were at the waterhole. Unfortunately not everyone saw her, but amazing to think they were so close to us. We went for dinner and then off to bed.

Day 6:
Onguma

Thursday 19 September 2024

This morning we left at 06:45 for our first drive in Etosha National Park with Brian. At the first waterhole, we found a number of spotted hyena who were on a giraffe kill, typically behind a huge pile of reeds, so we could only see the hyenas and black-backed jackals coming and going behind the vegetation. With the lovely morning light we were able to capture some nice reflections.



There were also some vultures behind the hyenas and jackals, waiting their turn, fighting for the best perch on a dead tree to see their prize. After watching the dynamics of this interesting scene for a while, we passed a male lion asleep by a water hole so carried on and came across two vehicles stopped by the side of the road. We looked into the bush and saw a cheetah mum and her cub feeding on a springbok that she had killed and brought into the shade. Unfortunately, a number of vehicles collected there quite quickly so we had to move around to try and get a good view but after a while we decided to leave them and continue through the park.



We found another waterhole that was filled with a large number of elephant, kudu, oryx, vulture, zebra, impala and eland. We sat here for some time and watched the interactions and group dynamics. These drives with more time to watch the wildlife enables us to be more creative and witness some interesting behaviours including elephants and other mammals approaching the waterhole from a distance, speeding up as they get closer to the much needed water. If we're lucky, we can also look at the patterns created and have more abstract opportunities.



We heard about some more lions that had been seen nearby, so we went over and found five asleep close to a ditch.

Unfortunately they were not moving and seemed to be enjoying the quiet and shade, so we continued via another couple of waterholes and along the edge of Fischer's pan, where we could see some distant giraffes wobbling in the heat haze, crossing the seemingly endless pan. We encountered a couple of lone elephants making their way through the bush, taking some time to rest on a tree in the heat of the day and watched some impala and kudu extracting themselves from the sticky mud, before we made our way back to camp as it was getting very hot, so the heat haze prevented any photography.

After a relaxing break for lunch, we went out again at 15:00 with Brian back into the park. It was still very hot and dry, but we were keen to see what was going on and if we could find something to photograph as the light improved later on.

We drove to a couple of waterholes that were still relatively quiet, but there were some zebra, oryx, elephants and impala playing.



We drove to where the lions were earlier and they were all still there lying down. We watched for a while and then drove on to a waterhole where a huge elephant herd approached.



Photo by Lisa Trowse

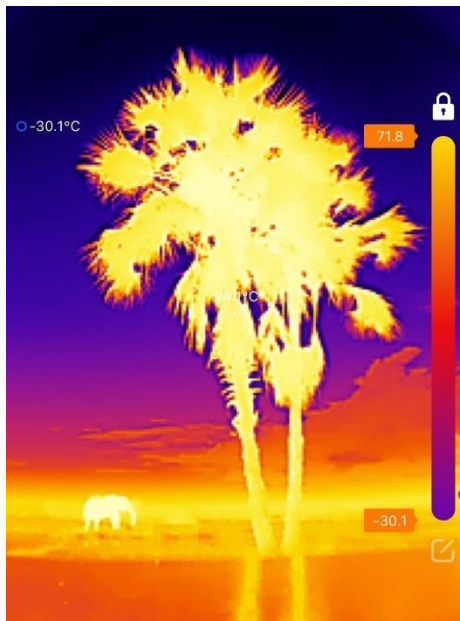
The herd walked in a long, but tightly protected line as they were sheltering babies that were around 3-5 years old. They came to the waterhole for some water, then walked past us down into the bush where a hornbill posed nicely for a silhouette as the light was fading.



Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com



Just before dinner we were visited at the waterhole by an elephant. It was dark by then but I had my thermal camera that attaches to my phone, so I took some shots of it by the palm trees, which created some interesting images.



Day 7:
Onguma

Friday 20 September 2024

Today we set off for our first morning in the Onkolo hide. After an early breakfast at 05:30, we left at 06:15 to get to the hide at 06:30 and set up. The light improved quickly and by 07:00 there was a beautiful golden glow.



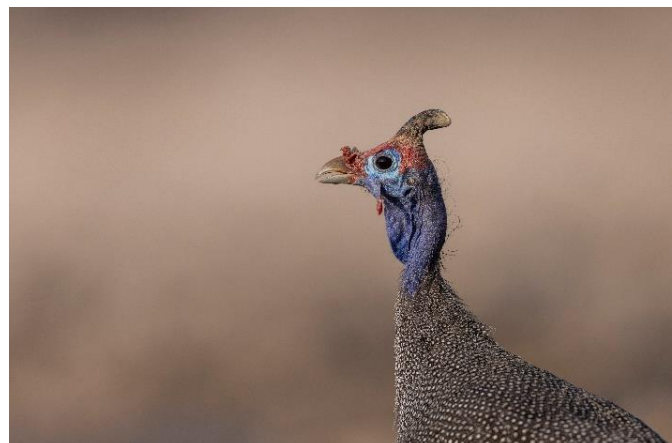
Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

We had visits from a lot of birds early on, including blue waxbills, red billed weaver, golden breasted bunting, 'go-away' birds, starling, blacksmiths plovers and red billed hornbills.



As we sat there, we could hear lions calling. They didn't seem too far away so we kept our fingers crossed, but they didn't come to visit us unfortunately.

At around 08:00 a flock of about 100 guinea fowl came to drink from the waterhole. They are always funny to see on a drive, but when you can sit and watch them they're very entertaining. The group dynamics are clear and we watched them follow each other around – nobody wanted to be left on their own. They are always alert.



We heard some rustling in the bush and a small herd of kudu approached, closely followed by three black-faced impala. The male kudu had very impressive horns, showing his age and dominance.



After watching the impala and kudu nervously drink before heading back to the safety of the bushes, a warthog came in for a drink just before it was time for us to leave.



Two cheetah had been seen at the camp waterhole this morning and had been spotted again close to where we were as we left the hide, so we stopped off on the way back to see two of them sleeping in the shade of a termite mound to avoid the strong sunshine.



Over lunch we were visited at the waterhole by a large male elephant who drank for some time, giving everyone an opportunity to take some photos, get relatively close to the waterhole and enjoy the experience of being so near to one of these incredible creatures.

During lunch, some of the group explored the garden of the camp. The southern red-billed hornbills are frequent visitors and when we have time, we can position ourselves for some lovely shots.



After lunch, we left at 15:30 to go to Etosha NP with Brian. We drove towards Twee Palms, a waterhole that used to have two palm trees, but they were knocked over by elephants and now only the two trunks lie on the floor by the waterhole. Just before we arrived, we came across a large male lion sheltering under a bush from the heat. The waterhole is right on the edge of the salt pan, so we drove to the waterhole on the other side of the bush in the hope he may come out. We spent some time looking for small things around the waterhole and saw a couple of agamas catching termites that were uncharacteristically out in the afternoon sunshine.

After a final check on the lion, we were about to leave when we saw him stretch and start walking in our direction. We parked up and watched him drink from the waterhole, and although it was very low there was some water in among the mud.

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com



We got some lovely front-on shots as he left the water hole and moved out to lie in the grass.



We drove back towards Namutomi for a quick break then on to dik dik alley. We came across a giraffe on a ridge (a photographer's dream) so we stopped quickly before he went over to the other side in search of water.



We arrived as a huge herd of elephant was passing from the water hole down the road, so we stopped and they crossed in front of us. Being the picky photographers that we are we hoped they would have come the other way as the dust and the light was beautiful, but we still had some lovely opportunities!



After a short drive around the area, we made our way back to camp. On our way towards the main gate, there was a stunning large Martial eagle in the tree posing to say goodbye to everyone.



During dinner, Brian suddenly noticed a leopard come to drink at the waterhole. One of my rules is to never leave your room without a camera ... I broke my own rule! I raced back and grabbed mine and luckily she was still there when I got back. She started to leave as I sat on the edge of the terrace and it was very dark, so my only option was panning her as she walked away to get a record shot.



Day 8:**Saturday 21 September 2024**

Onguma to Ongava – drive through Etosha

This morning we returned to the hide. People often ask why we choose to do two sessions in there, and today was a great example of why. The weather was completely different to yesterday with a strong wind blowing and dust flying everywhere. We were visited by guinea fowl and red billed spurfowl, but even the small birds were kept away by the wind. One dik dik gingerly came to the edge of the bush, but with the wind blowing so hard it's very difficult for them to smell or hear predators, so it really puts them off and they tend to remain hidden, which was frustrating and disappointing for us, but it's always worth waiting just in case something comes along! A few birds did arrive at various points, including a red-billed spurfowl, but it was a quiet session.



In the end, Engelbrecht had said a lion had caught a giraffe the night before so he suggested we could go and see if we could find it. We left the hide at 09:00 and drove towards the lions, but we were told about two cheetah nearby so we detoured. We found them walking through the bush but they lay under a tree far from the road, so we sped off to see if we could find the lions.



As we arrived at the area where the kill had happened, we saw one settling itself down next to a termite mound close to Onguma tented camp. We knew there should be two and couldn't see the kill so we looked around and realised that we'd just driven straight past her guarding the giraffe kill, completely camouflaged under a tree. The sun was already quite strong by this point so we managed to get a few images of them but they were resting from the heat in the shade.



Arriving back to camp slightly later than planned, we gathered our things together and said our farewells to the lovely staff before leaving towards the gates of Etosha at around 10:45 and made our way over to the western side.

We stopped briefly at the edge of the salt pan for a quick break and to see the open area stretch out in the heat. A quick test of the thermal camera suggested the ground was 59 degrees centigrade in places. No wonder we were feeling quite hot!

We continued our long drive west, observing ostrich, elephants and a white rhino family along the way, but unfortunately the heat haze was too intense to make it worth stopping. We did manage a couple of short stops, for an agama and our first sighting of a secretary bird.



We arrived at Okakuejo for a break and it was very busy. We stopped to stretch our legs, heading to the waterhole but we could only see three giraffe drinking. The ground squirrels put on a good show for those who wanted some photos, popping in and out of their burrows.

We stopped at a waterhole on the way out, which Brian knows to be popular with the 'ghost' elephants of Etosha and we did find some there, so spent some time watching them, which was great as two or three of them spent some time resting their trunks on their tusks. There were other species there to keep us entertained, including ostriches and springbok, so we stayed for a while to watch before continuing our drive to Ongava.



We arrived to a very welcome cold lemonade and comfy seats to enjoy the late afternoon sunshine. After checking in, everyone had some time to rest and/or visit the hide before dinner. As well as the hide, the lodge has a healthy population of dassies, who were also enjoying the final rays of the day.



There were duikers and rhinos at the waterhole throughout the evening so we watched and enjoyed while having dinner.

Day 9:
Ongava

Sunday 22 September 2024

This morning we set out for an early morning drive in Ongava with our driver, Teacher. Things were very dry this side of the park and a lot of the wildlife had moved further east due to the lack of water, so we didn't know what we would find. We passed a small group of oryx but they retreated into the bush so we carried on to the waterhole nearby. There were rhino and lion prints, so they had obviously visited recently. We drove on to find some springbok and kudu in lovely morning light.



We saw a swallow-tailed bee-eater and noticed it returned to the same tree, as they tend to do, but there were others there as well. We sat and watched them hunting insects for a while and feeding each other. Too far away for any good shots, but really lovely to watch.

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

We approached a waterhole, where a lone giraffe was drinking. We stopped at a bush trying to capture some spider wasps in flight and a pair of gabar goshawks who flew into the base of the bush.

We spent some time at the waterhole, enjoying the range of wildlife and watched a huge murmuration of a flock of red-billed quelea.



We arrived back at the lodge for lunch and had visits from an African hawk-eagle, giraffe, impala and more at the hide as well as dassies and mongooses around the rock piles. It's very difficult to go back to your room as there is always something going on!



Today was World Rhino Day so everyone at Ongava congregated for afternoon tea at Andersson's camp for a celebration and a look at research centre, which is funded by donations from everyone who stays at the reserve. With some slight increases in their population, killing for their horns is still a huge problem, so there is a lot of protection for them and work being done to further increase their numbers. After a lovely speech and some incredible rhino shaped cakes, we left for our afternoon drive, passing a couple of elephants quite quickly but we decided to carry on.

As we drove close to the waterhole, we heard about two rhino close by so we drove in that direction, past some springbok and birds. We saw the rhinos deep in the bush so we went around, but we could see it would take them some time so we decided to wait. The light was improving as it was getting towards sunset, so we waited on the other side of the patch of bush between the rhinos and the waterhole in the hope that they would come towards us. We could hear a lion calling nearby, so drove around to see if we could locate it, but were unable to so we returned and waited. Just before sunset, the rhinos emerged from the bush and we were ready with our cameras... and then they lay down. They stayed there until the sun had set, walking past us as we had our sundowner G&Ts in hand. Not great for photography but a lovely encounter, particularly on World Rhino Day!

Day 10:
Ongava/Etosha

Monday 23 September 2024

This morning was our first exploration of the south-western side of Etosha with Brian. As we approached the exit of Ongava, a young lion nonchalantly approached and crossed the road in front of us, disappearing into the bush the other side. What a lovely start to the day!

As we drove into Etosha, we came across a vehicle and saw some lions making their way towards the waterhole. There were a couple of other vehicles around too and more were coming into the park so we decided to make our way to the waterhole and position ourselves where we thought they'd come across to drink. It's always a risk, but great when it works! We got our spot and waited for them. More and more vehicles arrived, vying for space around us. After a few minutes, two young male lions came out of the bush towards us, giving us some lovely photo opportunities.



We had seen a few more older cats with them, but Brian thought that the older females will have waited in the bush as it had become a bit too busy at the waterhole. After we had some shots of them approaching, we decided to leave the area as there were too many vehicles, and we drove down one of the back roads to do a loop back to the main road.



We stopped a couple of times for giraffe and ostrich walking through the low grasses, so we could use it as foreground. As we were watching the giraffe, a rustle next to the vehicle alerted us to a steenbok, which had been happily eating the leaves off the tree without being noticed.



We stopped at Okakuejo for a break with time for coffee, a look at the waterhole and a bit of shopping. There wasn't too much at the waterhole, but we had some flocks of sandgrouse flying in and out, providing some nice opportunities and there was a little grebe floating and diving on the water.

As we left, we noted that the bushes are much lower on the western side. This is because they have shallow roots. In the east they can have longer roots as there is more water, but there is less on the west, so the bushes have to adapt to stay alive.



We stopped to photograph a northern black korhaan, surprisingly out in the open and then went to the waterhole where some oryx were approaching. We positioned ourselves so that we were in front of them and had some lovely views of them coming towards us. After a few minutes, we noticed some elephants also approaching from that side, so we repositioned our vehicle and were rewarded with some beautiful views of three large bulls coming towards us.



Once they passed us, we moved on, driving down another back road and within five minutes we come across not one, but two leopard tortoises on the edge of the road! It is of course not until you stop that you are able to see the smaller things, but often when we stop for larger animals, including the tortoises, we see the skinks and lizards basking on top of rocks nearby.



The sun was getting quite hot by this time, so we made our way back to the lodge for lunch and a break.

When we got back, Teacher came over to chat as this morning the pack of seven lions had killed a zebra close to Andersson's camp. He had seen it this morning so wanted to see if we were keen to leave early at 15:45 to go and see them before other vehicles started to move. Yes please! But first, lunchtime. As we sat at the table, we saw a golden-tailed woodpecker in a nearby tree and watched it move around before flying off. Very difficult to photograph in the bright sunlight and dark shade, but we managed a couple of record shots at least. As usual, the dassies were there to keep everyone entertained in the rock piles.



Sneaking out early, we made our way to the site of the kill and found the carcass but no lions so continued towards the lodge. We found all seven lions lying around a mopani tree. They were looking towards the water hole and we thought they were watching the people on the terrace but then a large male lion (around 4.5 years old) walked from the waterhole. It was clear he'd been at the carcass as he had blood around his mouth and mane. The others were cautious but three of the pride had just started walking towards the zebra so we sped around as we could see there may be some interesting interactions.



He must've started to run because as we arrived only a few seconds later, the larger male was already chasing the three younger lions off the kill, which led to lots of dust and some incredible noises. This is the sort of encounter when you realise how they get their title of kings of the jungle. It's always a bit incongruous when you're surrounded by dry ground and bushes, as jungle conjours images of lush, green surroundings, but either way these lions are the bosses. The large male continued to assert his dominance by growling at them and displaying a flehmen response to the smells around the zebra. We stayed for a while but nobody moved so we decided to leave and see what we could find.



We drove to the waterhole where we had been the day before but it was very quiet. Teacher spotted baboon tracks on the ground, but there was no sign of them so they must've come and gone quite recently. There were giraffes eating a mineral block and a small herd of impala looking alert but we scanned the area and couldn't see anything. We carried on driving through the area, noting how quiet it was. As we turned a corner, something moved in the bushes beside us and we saw the back of a white rhino. Noting it was coming towards the road, we waited and as it emerged, it turns out it was a female with her (around) three week old baby.

We drove alongside them for a while as they walked through the slightly more open areas, marvelling at the pair of them and then we decided to head to the waterhole to have our sundowners and wait for them as they were going in that direction. It's that risk again...!

This time we were rewarded ... and then some. Mum and baby came out of the bush and walked right towards us and the waterhole, kicking up the dust as they sped up when they got closer, providing some lovely opportunities for us. The light was low, so as ever it was challenging but just an incredible moment for everyone to see and capture. The mother drank from the waterhole as the baby suckled. We stayed for a few minutes until the sun had set and made our way back to camp for our final dinner. What a day!



There were some black rhinos at the waterhole and we heard that we had just missed elephants and a lion at the waterhole before we got back, but nothing could take us down from cloud nine where we were happily sitting.

Day 11:
Ongava to Palmwag

Tuesday 24 September 2024

This morning it was time to say our farewells to the lovely staff at Ongava and at around 08:00 we started our journey west to Palmwag. We stopped in Outjo for a quick coffee and gift/jewel shop stop (a must!) and then continued. A little later we stopped for petrol and as everyone got out for a leg stretch and bathroom stop, I spotted a cone headed mantis close to the vehicle on a storage cage. The cameras and macro lenses came out and we spent some time photographing the beauty before carrying on. You really never know what you're going to find!



We drove through some really beautiful scenery, through Grootberg with its dramatic rock formations, imposing mountains and impressive valleys. We could feel the heat intensify as we travelled through the area. The most noticeable thing as the landscape changes is the increase in rocks and hills and the absence of the termite mounds. The mounds start being replaced by tussock like grass, known as *eurphorbia damara*, which contains an extremely toxic neurotoxin so we were advised to steer very clear of them!

We arrived at Palmwag lodge, going straight for lunch in the pool bar, where we watched some agamas also catching their lunch and saw a bokmakierie, a bird we hadn't seen before, which was beautiful. On our way to collect our bags, we were treated to the spectacle of two elephants, who came through the lodge grounds very close to the spectators (almost too close at times so some had to be moved on!).

We met

our

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

guide, Rodney, and went out for our first drive from the lodge into the conservation area. On the way, we passed another bird first – a pair of Rupells korhaan whose call sounds like frogs! The male put on a



brief display for us as we sat and watched.

As we left the main road, we were scanning the area and saw a couple of oryx and kudu quite far away in the bushes, but then Rodney spotted something through the binoculars so we drove closer and he started to get very excited. It was a male black rhino! We approached slowly, initially in the vehicle and then by foot and we were able to get within about 150 metres of him without him being bothered by our presence which was an amazing experience, particularly as we were the only ones there. We were very quiet and tried a few angles to get the best images while he dutifully stood and posed for us.



We left him eating and moved further away for sundowners with a lovely view of the sunset across the mountains and returned to the lodge for a buffet dinner before bed.

Day 12:
Palmwag Lodge

Wednesday 25 September 2024

We were all woken at around 04:30 this morning by a strange sound, not often heard in this area, some intense thunder and heavy rain! This was the first rain the area, and therefore the first the staff had seen, in 18 months so everyone was very excited. Four of us went out rhino tracking today, and some of the others decided to remain at the lodge to photograph birds, agama lizards and whatever else came to visit.

The temperature had dropped considerably and the wind and rain continued throughout the day. It was a long drive to the area where we would be tracking - we passed through the veterinary gate, there to prevent the spread of foot and mouth disease among other things, and drove around 50 kilometres to the area we would be exploring.

We spent a lot of time driving around the area with another vehicle and some trackers. They located tracks, but worryingly they also found some human tracks suggesting that poachers were somewhere nearby. We followed the tracks for a while, but Rodney said that the face the rhinos seem to be running was not normal, so unfortunately it became increasingly unlikely that we would have a good sighting. Usually the rhinos are relaxed, so it was sad to hear that their behaviour had changed today. We passed through some incredible scenery, including plains full of welwitschia plants and euphorbia damarana. We returned to the lodge mid afternoon, unfortunately not having seen a rhino but with some lovely landscapes etched in our memories.

Day 13:

Palmwag to Malansrus Lodge

Thursday 26 September 2024

A much more leisurely morning than yesterday, we had a lie in and some time to photograph some agamas, masked weavers making nests and bokmakierie around the lodge grounds. We left at around 08:30 and drove south, out of basalt area in to sedimentary 'mishmash', which starts after a large sandstone pillar that is strangely sat by the road. It's a fascinating landscape, so we made a few stops along the way to stretch legs/photograph.



We arrived at Malansrus to some very welcome cold towels – the heat had intensified again here. We had an early lunch then went out at 14:30 for elephant tracking with our guide, Herman. We were leaving early as unfortunately the elephants had moved recently much further from camp, so it would be a long drive to get to the area. There are less than 150 desert elephants left in the wild so we were all looking forward to what we may find.

We drove through the Aba Huab river bed stopping on the way for a huge herd of giraffe making their way to some water. Continuing in to the riverbed, we initially found a breeding herd of five elephants, including a young four year old. We stayed with them for a bit but more vehicles were arriving and the photographic opportunities were limited so we carried on. We came upon two bulls including the oldest male in the area, known as Oscar who is between 40-50 years old. They were very happily eating leaves off the bushes and then one stretched up to take some leaves from higher in the trees. This benefits them in two ways as the leaves are fresher higher up as they haven't been disturbed, but also disturbing the tree means that the fruit falls down, which is a treat for both elephants and baboons.



There are around 35 elephants in the area and we heard that another herd of seven had been seen nearby, so we drove to the waterhole but couldn't find them, so we returned to spend more time with the two males for a while, before making our way to a couple of viewpoints overlooking the dunes. From one viewpoint, the sheer scale of which astounded us, we could see the group of five that we'd seen first, as well as a group of ostrich crossing a huge desert plain.



We went to one more beautiful viewpoint before starting our long drive back to the lodge for a much needed shower to get rid of all the sand in our clothes, bags and bodies (particularly our ears!) and then a cold drink and dinner.

Day 14:

Friday 27 September 2024

Malansrus Lodge to Hansa Hotel

Another slightly more leisurely morning meant a slow start with some breakfast before we left at 08:10 for our long drive to Swakopmund.

We had a brief stop at the cactus garden in Uis, but continued towards Cape Cross and arrived at around 12:30. Cape Cross is a protected reserve, owned and managed by the Namibian government and it's home to one of the largest Cape fur seal colonies in the world with around 80-100,000 seals there. It's quite an assault to the senses as you arrive but it's well worth a visit. As soon as we got out of the vehicle, there were a number of seals on the rocks nearby and all you could hear (and smell!) was seals. We spent around 45 minutes here exploring, photographing and generally watching in awe trying to take it all in! Photographically quite challenging again, particularly as we arrived at midday when the sun was quite strong and unfortunately clouds were limited, but it was a lovely experience and the sheer number of

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

animals meant that everyone had a variety of photographic opportunities.



After we'd finished here, we went for lunch at the Cape Cross Hotel nearby before continuing our drive along the desolate road down the Skeleton Coast, passing salt mining areas with their beautiful crystals and patterns in the sand. We stopped briefly at the wreck of the Zeila fishing boat, which was stranded here in 2008, which not only provides photographic opportunities with the boat, but also the cormorants who fly to and from it, and the plovers that scuttle along the sand in front of it.



Finishing our long day of driving, we arrived in Swakopmund, checking in to our hotel and had a little time to freshen up before going for dinner on the seafront. After our previous couple of days of intense heat, the drop in temperature here was significant so lots more layers appeared!

Day 15:
Swakopmund

Saturday 28 September 2024

This morning we were collected for our Living desert tour. We were driven to the start and teamed up with another vehicle, with Gunther leading the group. After an initial talk about the geology and how these species have adapted to live in this seemingly inhabitable location, we were off.

At our first stop, we searched for the tiny damus beetles, only around 2 millimetres in size. The first of the big five that we found was the palmato gecko that posed nicely, followed by a legless lizard (blind) that had lost its tail, which grows back (just a little less blue). As we were about to leave we found a shovel nosed lizard so we had some opportunities for some photographs of that too.

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com



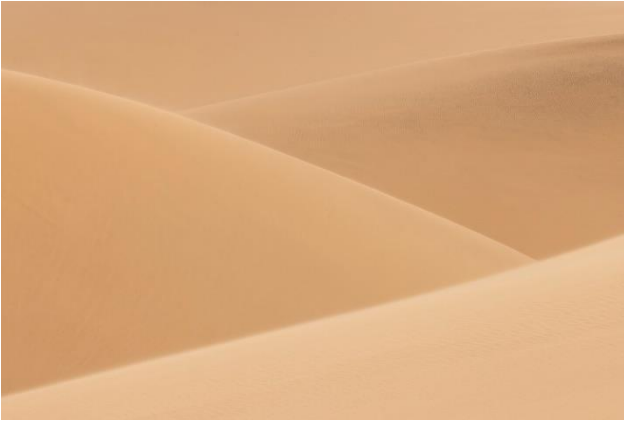
Next was a female Namaqua chameleon, whose colour changed a few times as we watched, which is always lovely to see.



We drove on and found a sidewinder adder so spent some time before carrying on past a few tok tokkies waking up and scampering up the dunes.



At the drink/coffee stop we swapped out to our closed 4x4 vehicles with Ekkie and Yandre and we drove out of the dunes towards Walvis Bay and then continued further south to sandwich harbour. In the Namib Naukluft national park the dunes extend for miles. We drove along the coast, with the sea on our right and the dunes on the left, before heading into the dunes themselves to explore. We came across three oryx, some springbok and a jackal sleeping inside the dunes, hiding from the wind.



Going up, over and around the dunes, we stopped at a number of points offering incredible views of the undulating dunes and where the dunes meet the sea.

As we drove, we saw a couple of ostrich in the distance so we moved closer and watched them enjoying the small plants for a while. We drove on to another viewpoint and as we returned, the male ostrich was perched atop on of the dunes, in the perfect position so we screeched to a halt and took some photos before he disappeared over the edge to the other side.

We made our way back to Swakopmund, stopping briefly at Walvis Bay to spend a bit of time with the flamingos in some lovely light, before heading back to dinner.

Day 16:

Swakopmund to Okapuka Lodge

Sunday 29 September 2024

This morning we explored the area around Swakopmund, Walvis Bay and stayed within the dunes, seeking the dune lark, photographing the flamingos and looking for meerkats. At our first stop, we photographed some lovely chestnut-banded plovers and greater crested terns before continuing on to Walvis Bay. The wind had not picked up yet, so we were able to capture some lovely reflections.



Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

We drove to Walvis Bay and then around the lagoons on the edges of town, home to a large number of flamingos as well as a lot of other waders that we saw, including glossy ibis, Kittlitz plover, purple swamp hen, Tottinot teal and maccoa ducks. Most were too far away to photograph, but we had some good views of some.



Our final stop was back in the desolate sandy landscape alongside the huge water pipes, looking for dune lark and meerkats. We saw some burrows but unfortunately could not find any meerkats, so we made our way back to the hotel to meet Brian. After some lunch, we drove to our final destination.



We arrived as the sun was starting to set and were greeted with warthogs, springbok, lilac-breasted rollers and ostriches on the grass outside the lodge. We had a few minutes to photograph them before the sun set, but the direction of the sun led to some gorgeous lighting. All too soon it was time to shower and head for our final dinner.

Day 17:
Morning drive & departure

Monday 30 September 2024

We left at sunrise this morning for our final game drive in the Okapuka reserve with PJ, our guide. As we drove along, we were being watched by a number of lilac-breasted rollers in the trees and soon came across a large herd of wildebeest and zebra. PJ explained that they are often found together as wildebeest can't see very well and zebras can see but can't hear well so they are perfect travel companions. Two male ostrich were chasing each other in the morning sunlight, providing some lovely opportunities for backlit feathers.



The area is 10,000 hectares but there are no predators, so if Disney did safaris, this is where it would be! The wildlife is quite relaxed and it's lovely to watch their behaviour. Springbok 'pronking' and rhinos happily munching on low grasses, surrounded by warthog, eland, blesbok, sables and eland.

We drove past a small flock of Namaqua doves, which we'd not seen yet and then quickly came across two male ostriches sizing each other up. It quickly turned into a fight and we (as well as a group of female ostrich) watched on as they tore feathers out of each other.



Before too long it was time to make our way back to the lodge, where we quickly packed up and made our way to the main area to spend some time before lunch and our final drive with Brian to the airport, where we said our goodbyes and started the journey home.

Day 18:

We arrived home this morning and said our goodbyes.

Tuesday 1 October 2024

Sign up to our e-news

Sign up to our e-news to find out more about our tours, events, late availability, offers and tour reports at <https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/subscribe>

Bird Checklist:

1. Common Ostrich
2. Egyptian goose
3. Hottentot teal
4. Cape shoveler
5. Cape teal
6. Maccoa duck
7. Helmeted guineafowl
8. Red billed spurfowl
9. Swainson's spurfowl
10. Little grebe
11. Black necked grebe
12. Greater flamingo
13. Lesser flamingo
14. Black headed heron
15. Grey heron
16. Marabou stork
17. Hadada ibis
18. Little egret
19. Great white pelican
20. White breasted cormorant
21. Cape Cormorant
22. Secretary bird
23. White backed vulture
24. Lappett's vulture
25. Black chested snake eagle
26. Bateleur eagle
27. Martial eagle
28. Tawny eagle
29. African hawk eagle
30. Gabar goshawk
31. Pale chanting goshawk
32. Kori Bustard
33. Ruppell's bustard
34. Red crested korhaan
35. Northern black korhaan
36. African crane
37. African swamphen
38. Common moorhen
39. Spotted thick knee
40. African oystercatcher
41. Black winged stilt
42. Pied avocet
43. Blacksmith lapwing
44. Crowned lapwing
45. Grey plover
46. Kittlitz plover
47. Three banded plover
48. White fronted plover
49. Common ringed plover

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

50. Ruff
51. Curlew sandpiper
52. Sanderling
53. Little stint
54. Common sandpiper
55. Wood sandpiper
56. Common greenshank
57. Hartlaub's gull
58. Kelp gull
59. Greater crested tern
60. Common tern
61. Double banded sandgrouse
62. Rock dove
63. Ring necked dove
64. Cape turtle dove
65. Laughing dove
66. Emerald spotted wood dove
67. Namaqua dove
68. Grey go-away bird
69. Verreaux's Eagle Owl
70. Pearl spotted owlet
71. Freckled nightjar
72. African palm swift
73. Common swift
74. Little swift
75. White rumped swift
76. Purple roller
77. Lilac breasted roller
78. Golden tailed woodpecker
79. Swallow tailed bee eater
80. African hoopoe
81. Southern red billed hornbill
82. Monteiro's hornbill
83. Southern yellow-billed hornbill
84. Bradfield's hornbill
85. African grey hornbill
86. Lesser kestrel
87. Red footed falcon
88. Ruppell's parrot
89. Rosy faced lovebird
90. Pririt batis
91. White tailed shrike
92. Bokmakierie
93. Crimson breasted shrike
94. Brubru
95. Southern white crowned shrike
96. Fork tailed drongo
97. Cape crow
98. Pied crow
99. Stark's lark
100. Red capped lark
101. African red-eyed bulbul
102. Rock martin
103. Common house martin
104. Grey backed camaroptera
105. Bare cheeked babbler

Find out more about our [Wonders of Namibia](#) trip or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

106. Southern pied babbler
107. Wattled starling
108. Cape glossy starling
109. Burchell's starling
110. Pale winged starling
111. Groundscraper thrush
112. White browed scrub robin
113. Marico flycatcher
114. Short toed rock thrush
115. Tractrac chat
116. Capped wheatear
117. Familiar chat
118. House sparrow
119. Cape sparrow
120. Red billed buffalo weaver
121. White browed sparrow weaver
122. Sociable weaver
123. Southern masked weaver
124. Red billed quelea
125. Green winged pytilia
126. Blue waxbill
127. Violet eared waxbill
128. Black faced waxbill
129. Cape wagtail
130. Lark like bunting
131. Golden breasted bunting