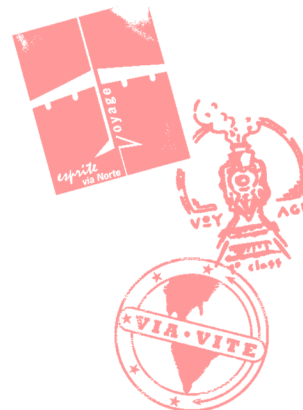


Diverse Namibia

From Sossusvlei to Etosha and in between

by Laurie Harris





Diverse Namibia

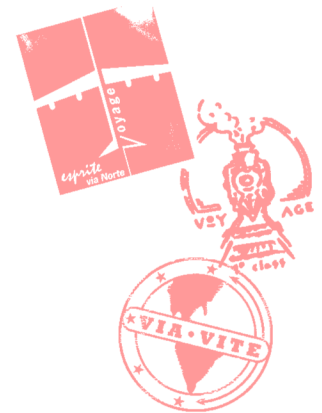
From Sossusvlei to Etosha and in between



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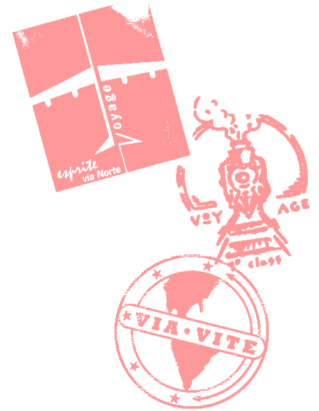


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Windhoek

My first day in Namibia started with an early morning tour of the capital city Windhoek. I was able to visit many of the prominent landmarks including the gothic-style Lutheran Christuskirche, Independence Memorial Museum (built by the North Koreans) and the Tintenpalast, home to Namibia's legislature. Another stop was the 1959 Heroes and Heroines Memorial Grave. The site located in the "Old Location" was the scene of the Old Location Uprising when blacks resisted being forcibly moved from their homes to be relocated in the Katutura township. During the conflict the South African authorities opened fire on the protestors killing 11 and wounding 44.





Christuskirche



Christuskirche



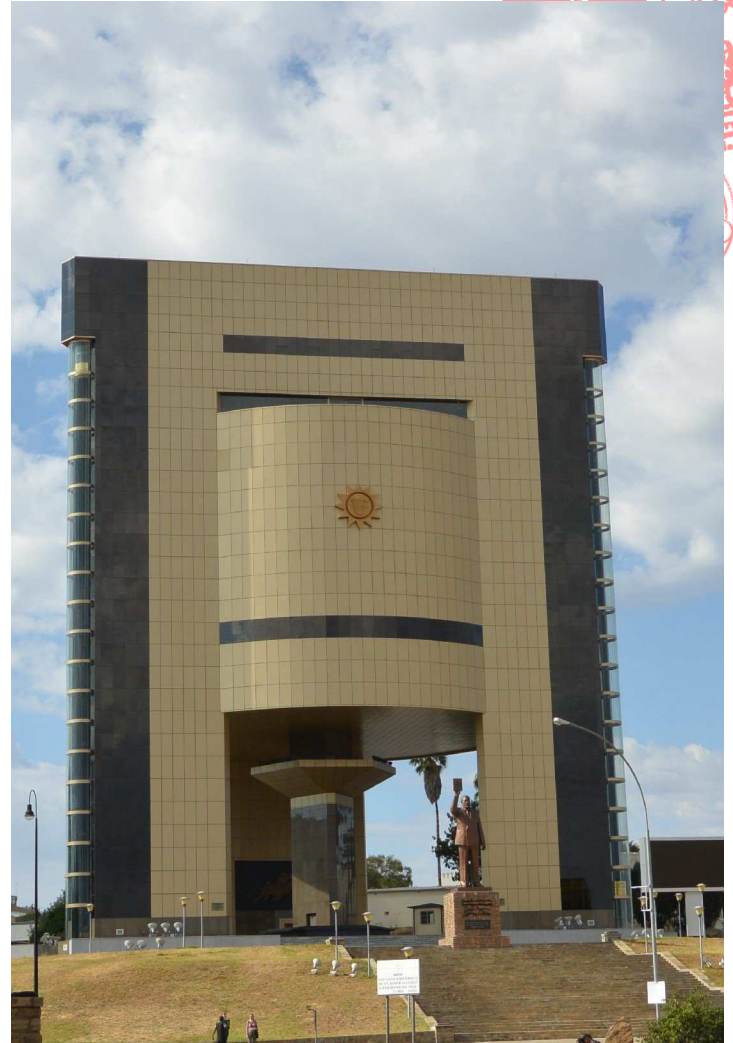
Downtown Windhoek (note Fidel Castro Street)



The Genocide Statue



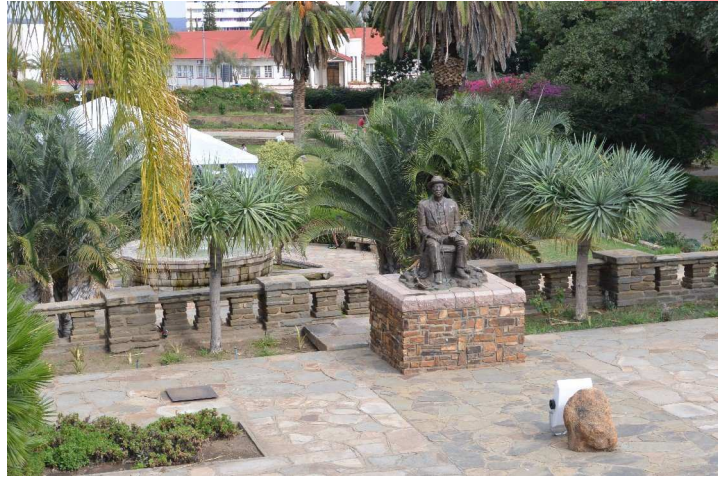
Alte Feste



Independence Memorial Museum with statue of Sam Nujoma



Tintenpalast (German for "Ink Palace") home of the Namibian legislature



Parliament Gardens - statue of Hosea Kutako



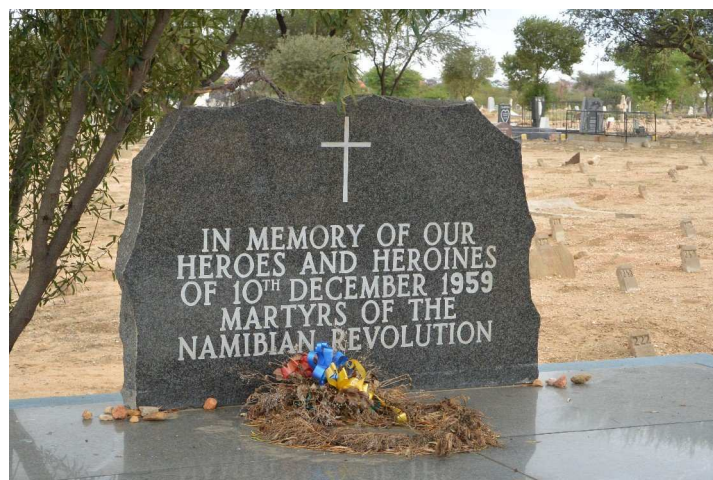
Parliament Gardens - statue of Hendrik Witbooi



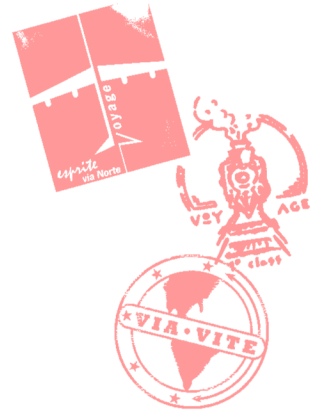
Parliament Gardens - statue of Reverend Theophilus Hamutumbangela



1959 Heroes and Heroines Memorial Grave







Sossusvlei

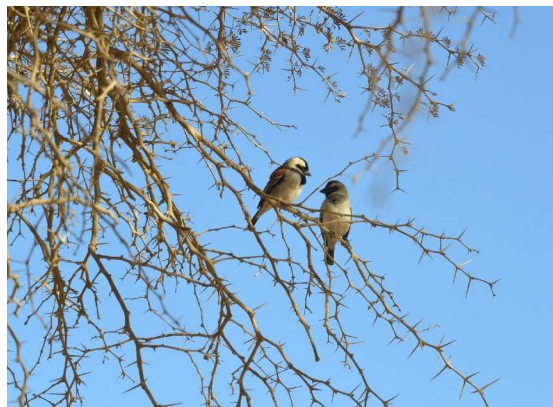
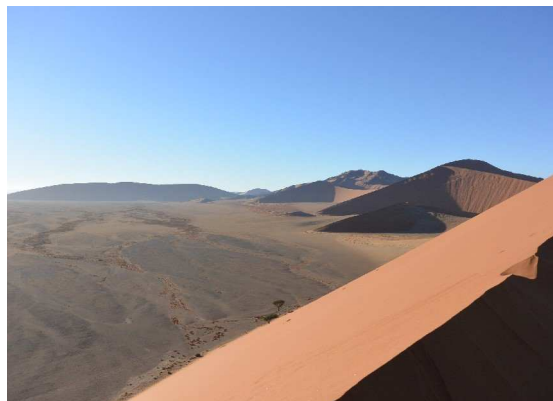
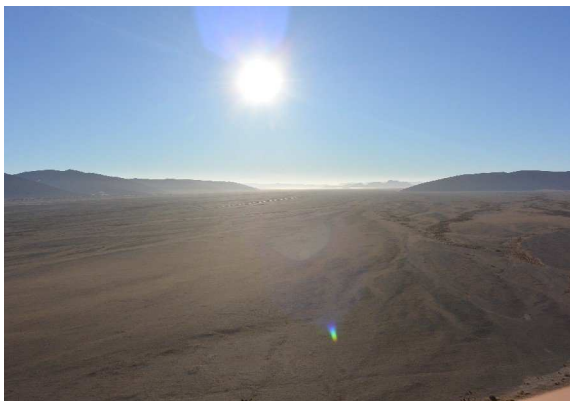
After a 12 hour, 200 mile drive (most of it off road) from Windhoek we arrived in the Sossusvlei region staying on Wilderness Safaris' private Kulala Reserve in the tented Kulala Adventurer Camp. Early the next day we entered Namib-Naukluft National Park where I had the opportunity to climb Dune 45. We next moved on to Deadvlei, a white clay pan consisting of 600 year old dead trees and often used as a shooting location in films and commercials. Overlooking Deadvlei is the 325m tall Big Daddy which is the largest dune in the Sossusvlei region.





170m tall Dune 45







Deadvlei ("dead marsh") at the base of Big Daddy



Big Mama



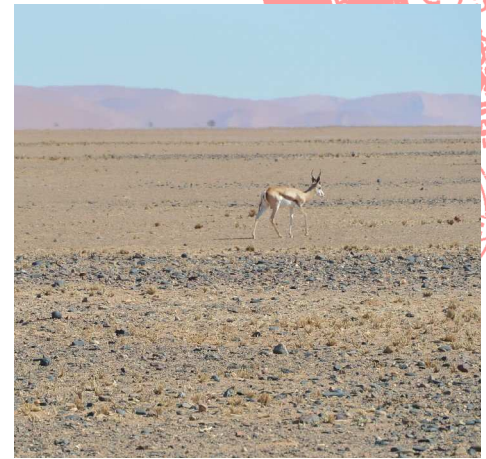
Big Daddy and Deadvlei



Black-backed Jackal



Oryx



Springbok

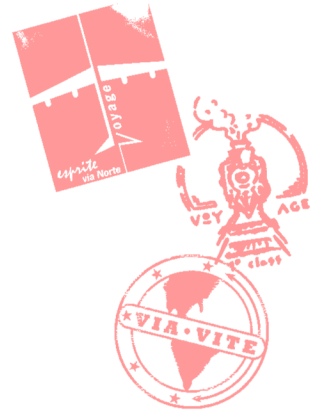


Kulala Adventurer Camp



Dining Tent





Sesriem Canyon

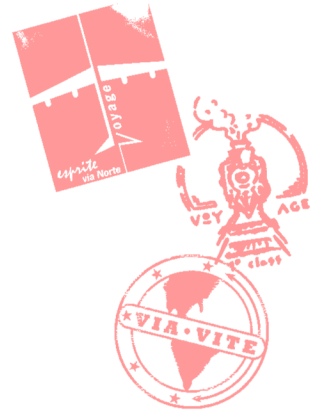
Later in the afternoon we visited Sesriem Canyon (Afrikaans for "six belts") so named as it took six belts connected together and attached to a bucket to lower into the canyon in order to scoop up water. The 1 km long 30 meter deep canyon was formed by the Tsauchab river and water still flows during the sparse rain of the summer months (October - April).











Swakopmund

We next drove 230 miles to Swakopmund on the central west coast of Namibia. The coast of Namibia is known for its much cooler climate compared to the adjacent desert and treacherous fog which has led to many shipwrecks along its "Skeleton Coast". During the drive to Swakopmund we passed through the small desert town of Solitaire, one of the only stops between Sossusvlei and Walvis Bay on the coast. The town is known for its many vintage car wrecks on display. Our drive also took us across the Tropic of Capricorn and the barren area known as the "Moon landscape". We stayed at the oldest hotel in Namibia, the 100-year old Hansa Hotel. For dinner we ate at one of the best seafood restaurants in Namibia, The Tug.

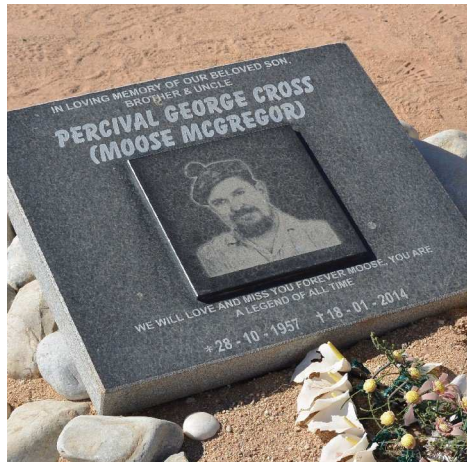




Solitaire



Moose McGregor's Desert Bakery



Moose McGregor's grave



Tropic of Capricorn



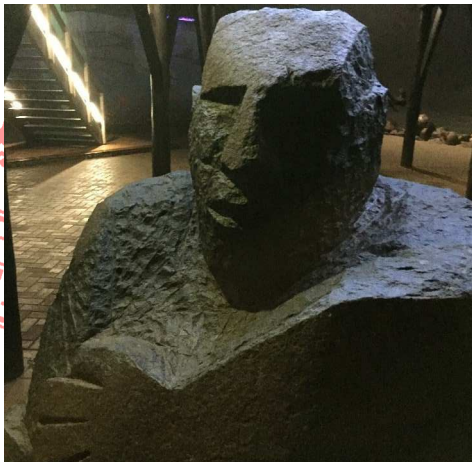
Moon Landscape



Moon Landscape



Inuksuk



The Tug Restaurant

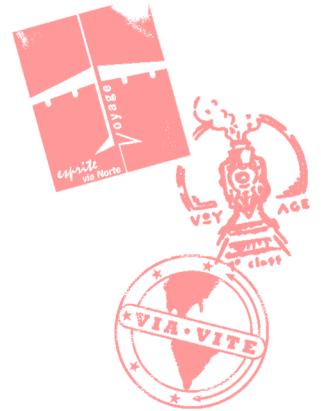


The Tug Restaurant



Hansa Hotel

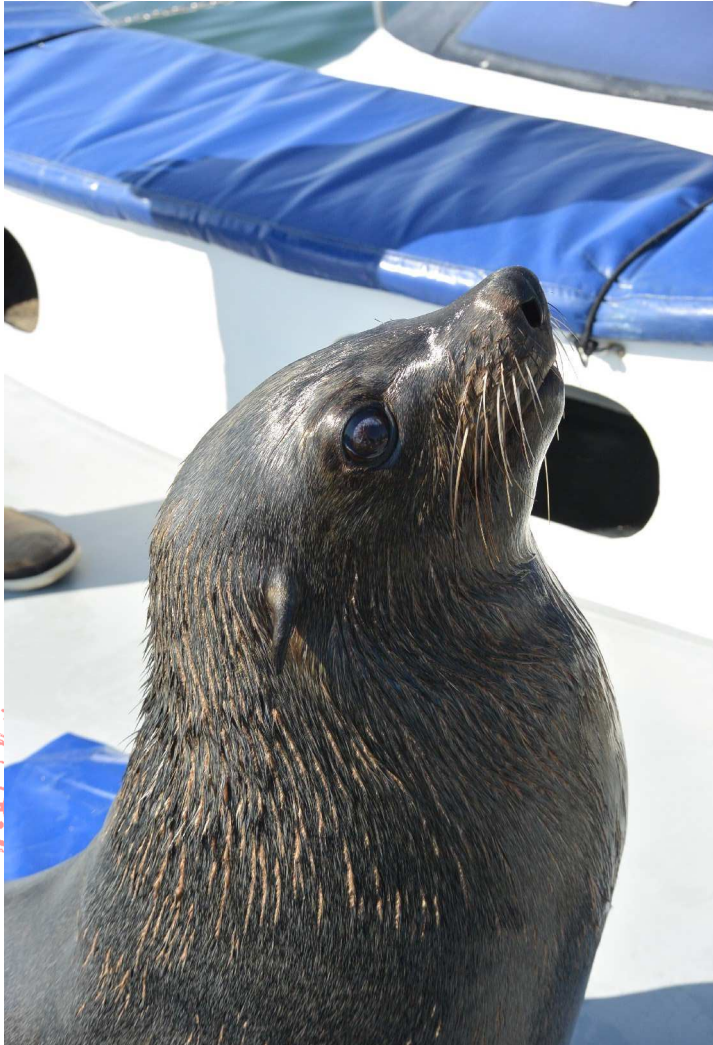




Walvis Bay

From Swakopmund we drove to the nearby city Walvis Bay (Afrikaans for "Whale Bay") to take a "Dolphin and Seal" catamaran cruise. On the catamaran we were visited onboard by numerous Great White Pelicans, the resident Cape Fur Seal and a Cape Comorant. We learned about the oysters cultivated in the bay and visited the seal colony at Pelican Point while catching sightings of Heaviside and Bottlenose dolphins.





Cape Fur Seal



Great White Pelicans



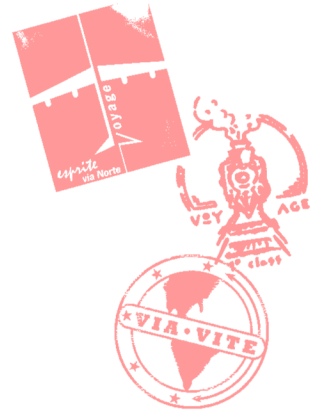
Cape Cormorant











Henties Bay

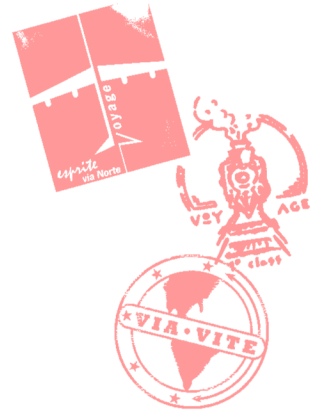
On the drive to Damaraland we first stopped in the Henties Bay area just north of Swakopmund along Namibia's "Skeleton Coast". We saw the wreck of the fishing trawler "Zeila" before moving on to the Cape Cross Seal colony. It was here Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão reached in 1486 while attempting to find a sea route to India. He erected a stone cross to claim the area for Portugal. Although the original cross was removed and taken to Berlin in 1893, two replicas now stand in its place.











The Road to Damaraland

From the coast we then drove 200 miles to Damaraland to Wilderness Safaris' Damaraland Adventurer Camp. Most of this drive was off road, often through dry riverbeds on only what could loosely be described as roads. The drive took us within view of Brandberg Mountain, Namibia's highest mountain. We also stopped for lunch along the way at the "Ugab Save the Rhino Trust Camp". The camp acts to protect the rare and endangered rhinos. The Namibian army is based from the camp in their anti-poaching efforts. We also visited the small village of De-Riet. The small community consists of former South Africans forced from their homes in the 1960s and later settled far away in Damaraland. Our guide also introduced us to the "living fossil" plant the Welwitschia. Some are thought to be over 2000 years old.







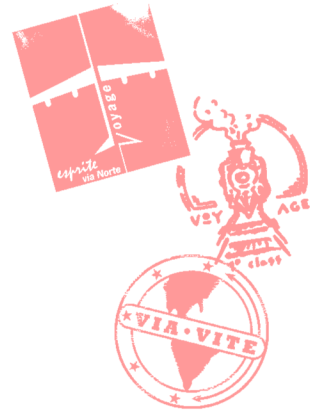
PAR
ARRIVE
5*A.SE











Damaraland

Damaraland is home to the elusive black rhino amongst other common big game animals. While we were unable to locate any rhino we did follow the trail of one or more lions in the area. While we didn't locate the lions there was a lion attack on the cattle of the people of De-Riet the night before we left the area. What we were able to spot was two families of desert elephant and our first glimpse of a giraffe.



Diverse Namibia



Baboon



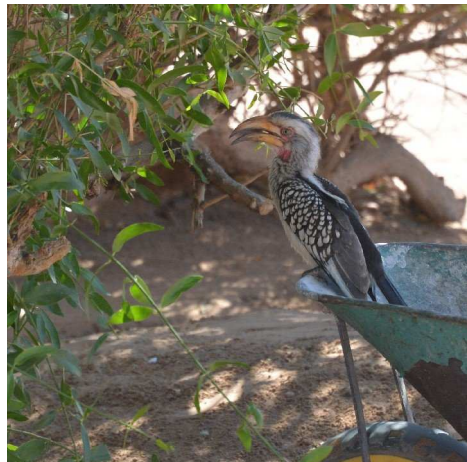
Springbok



Steenbok



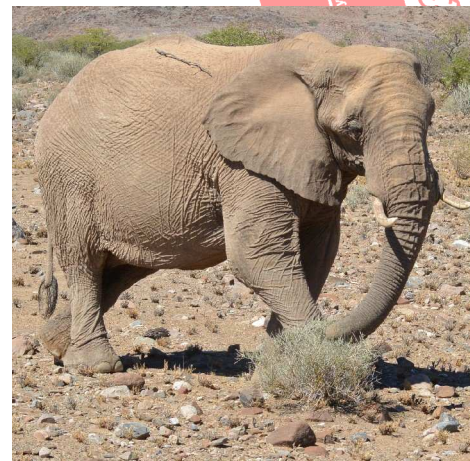
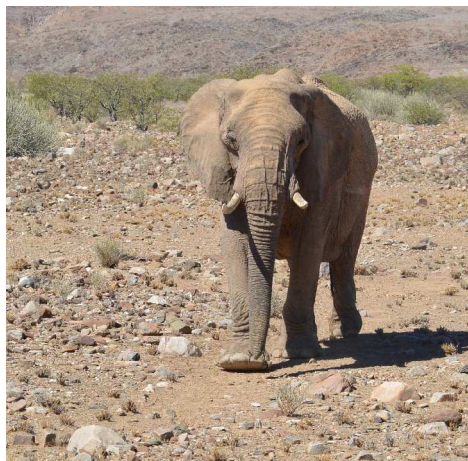
Giraffe



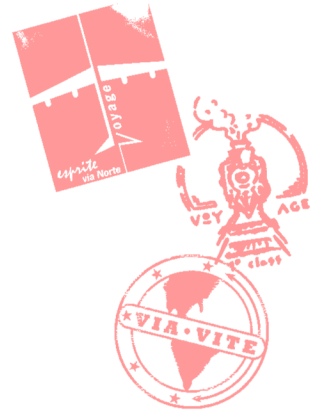
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill



Cape Sparrow







Twyfelfontein

While still in Damaraland we visited the site of ancient rock engravings at Twyfelfontein. Some of the engravings date back 6000 years and depict various indigenous animals such as lions, giraffe, rhino, ostrich and oryx. The carvings also depict seals and penguins demonstrating that these ancient peoples also visited the coast. The area was uninhabited by Europeans until after World War II when farmer David Levin moved his family to the area. Although he was able to discover an underground spring, it was not enough to sustain his family and herd. The name Twyfelfontein means "uncertain spring" in Afrikaans and became the name of the area. The area is now a protected nature reserve and Namibia's first World Heritage Site. We next visited the Damara Living Museum where locals reenact how the local Damara people lived in a simulated village.



Diverse Namibia



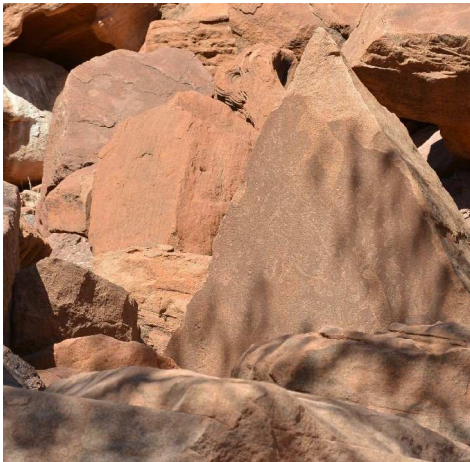
Twyfelfontein



Ruins of home of David Levin



Hyrax



Lion Plate with Lion Man



Damara Living Museum



Chief's throne room



Stripping hair off goat hide

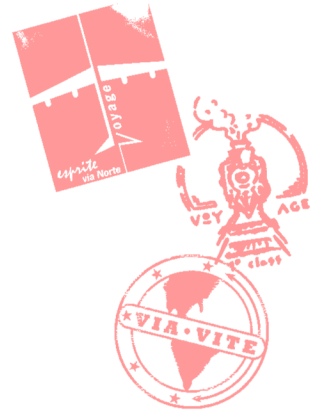


Mancala rock game



Making jewellery





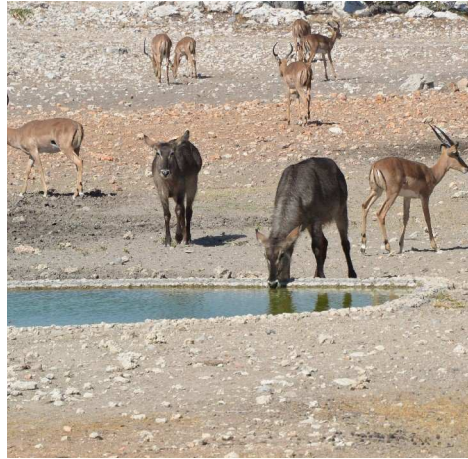
Ongava Game Reserve

We departed Damaraland and travelled north to our final stop near Etosha National Park. We stayed at Andersson's Camp on the Ongava Game Reserve adjacent to Etosha National Park. Andersson's Camp faces its own private water hole active at all times of the day and night. Ongava Game Reserve was originally a cattle ranch but was transformed into a game reserve and now boasts a wide variety of wildlife. Although Ongava is home to one of the largest black and white rhino populations we did not spot this elusive creature.





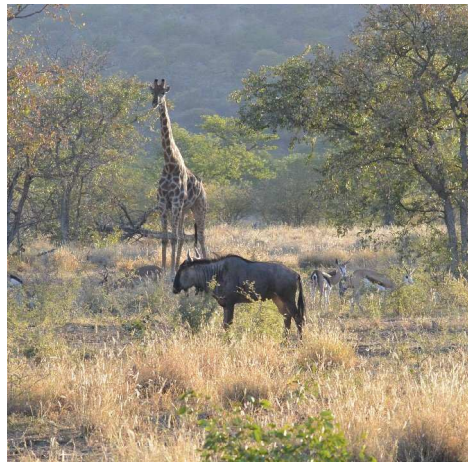
Family of Warthogs



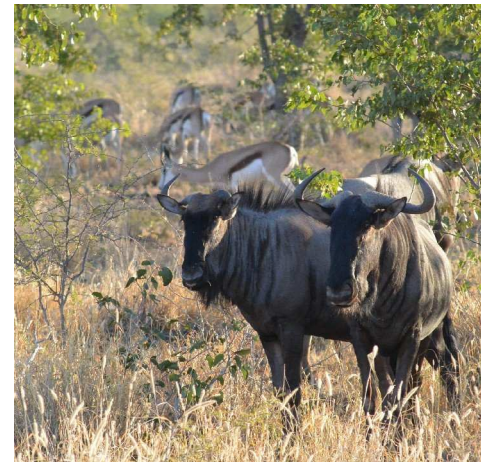
Water Bucks and Black-faced Impala



Oryx



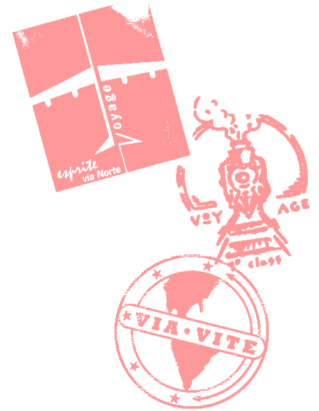
Giraffe, Springbok & Blue Wildebeest



Wildebeest & Springbok







Etosha National Park

Etosha National Park is Namibia's premier game reserve and the highlight of the tour. Etosha gets its name from the Etosha salt pan at the heart of the park. The word Etosha means "great white place". This vast dry lake bed is 120 km long and stretches across the visible horizon. The park is home to a diverse number of African species. We were able to witness the awkward way in which giraffe drink. The highlight of the visit was witnessing a failed ambush attack by a lioness on a herd of wildebeest.





Etosha National Park



120km long Etosha Pan



Ostrich



Pied Crow



Pale Chanting Goshawk



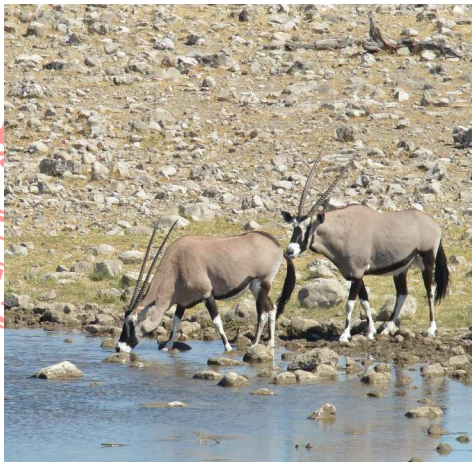
Springbok



Kudu



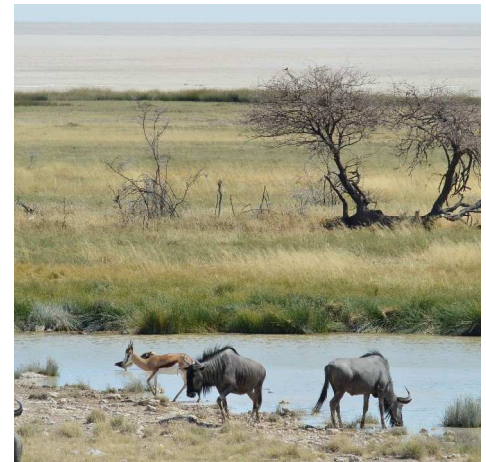
Red Hartebeest



Oryx



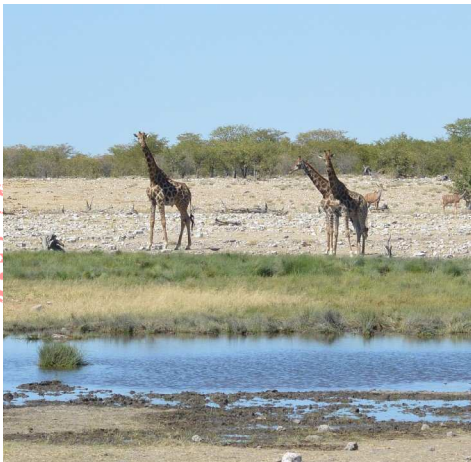
Kudu & Black-faced Impala



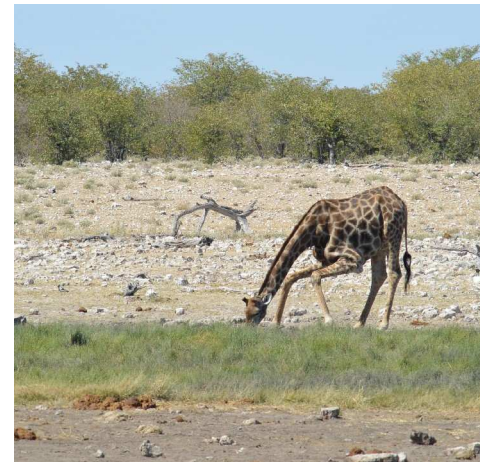
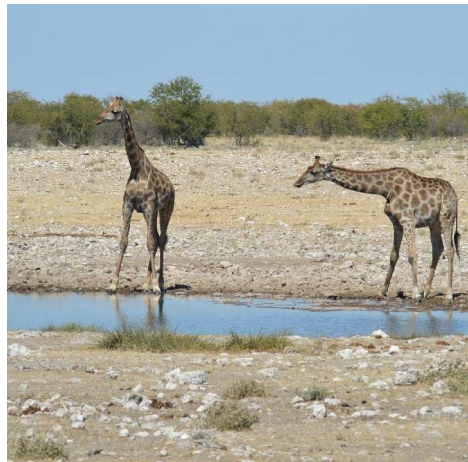
Springbok & Blue Wildebeest



Plains Zebra



Giraffe

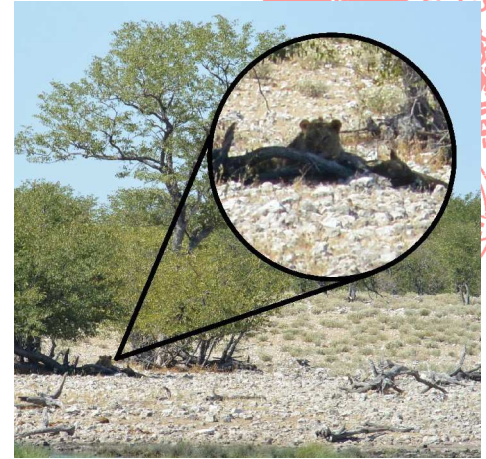




Wildebeest before the lioness attacks



Lioness after the failed attack



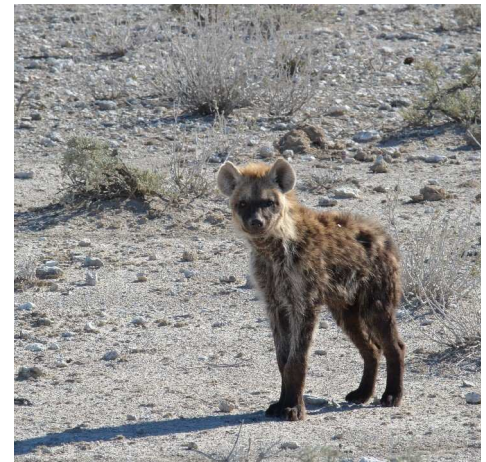
Lion and Lioness



Giraffe carcass killed by Lions in December

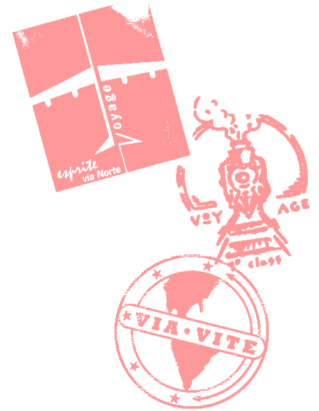


Black-backed Jackal



Spotted Hyena





Katutura Township

Following the Old Location uprising in 1959, blacks were forcibly relocated to the Katutura area outside of downtown Windhoek. Katutura means "the place where people do not want to live". On my final day in Namibia I joined Anna of Katu Tours on a bicycle ride through the township. During the tour we visited local marketplaces such as Oshetu Community Market and Soweto Market where I was able to see the various locally made goods and sample some of the local dishes such as kapana and mieliepap. Anna described some of the history of the area as well as steps by the government to improve the lives of the residents. Our tour ended with a visit to one of the local shebeens (roadside bars) where I was able to sample some of the local Amarula drink.





Katu Tours



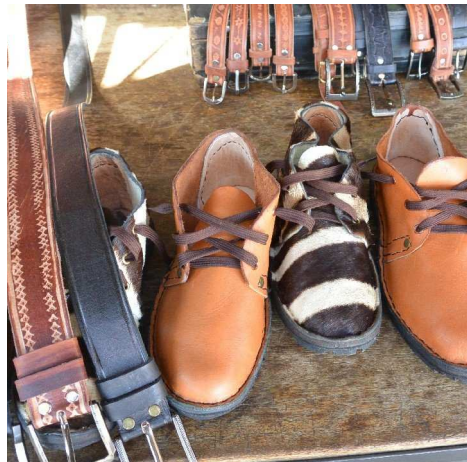
Single Quarters



One of many shebeens



Oshetu Community Market



Shoes & belts made from kudu and zebra leather



Soles made from old tires



Dried goods including Mopane worms



Kapana Men



Mieliepap



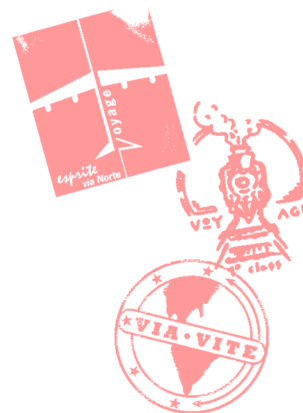
Soweto Market



Fruit stand and Laundry service



Marius, librarian for Voice of God Recordings



Although a vast desert country and home to one of the oldest deserts in the world, Namibia is still teeming with desert-adapted peoples and wildlife. Wilderness Safari's Diverse Namibia tour travels from the mountainous dunes of the south to the foggy coastline of the central west and north to the premier Etosha National Park game reserve.

