

Namibia & South Africa August - September 2019

Wild Flowers & Wild Animals

Update: 23/12/18 Please see the important note at the end of the last page.

Price: \$1895 The fee covers only our services. Full cost details are toward the end of this document.

Summary This trip combines a mix of wildlife, wild flowers, wild scenery and some local culture. We will use hire cars so we can go where we want, when we want. While it's mostly places I've been before, there will be some new ones. All photos here were taken on our previous trips.

Draft Itinerary There will be some changes but hopefully only minor ones.

Day 1 Arrive Cape Town. Preferred accom is Dale Court. I've been staying there since my first visit in 1999.

See <http://www.dalecourt.co.za/>

Day 2 Table Mt Walk. Up or down the cable car, starting or finishing in the Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens.

Day 3 Cape Town Sightseeing or Table Mt if previous day weather bad.

Day 4 Collect car(s). Drive to Olifantsbos Cottage, Cape of Good Hope. Short afternoon walk. F, G. See

https://www.sanparks.org/parks/table_mountain/tourism/accommodation.php

Make sure you click the link for Olifantsbos. I've been there several times and never tire of going back.

Day 5 Full day walk from Olifantsbos.

Day 6 Drive to Kogelberg Reserve, See

<https://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/kogelberg-nature-reserve/>

[nature-reserve/](https://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/kogelberg-nature-reserve/)

Day 7 Full day botanic walk with local guide at Kogelberg,

Day 8 Drive to the Cedarberg; stop at Stadsaal if time.

Accom depends on exact route and what's available.

Day 9-10 In the Cedarberg region, short to all day walks

depending on what's open

If we have two cars, there is a good through walk or two. We will try and include the Truitjieskraal cultural heritage rock art site

<https://www.capenature.co.za/truitjieskraal-launch/>

Day 11 North to Travellers Rest and the Sevilla Rock Art

trail. See <https://www.travellersrest.co.za/index.php>

and click the activities link. We'll spend a night there.

Day 12 North toward Springbok, flower viewing. If there is a good display, we'll detour to Niuwoudtville where there is a botanic garden with different plants to those we'll see elsewhere. (There is also an excellent all day walk at nearby Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve.) In 2017, we spent two nights at the Van Zijl Guesthouses. I'd happily go back. See <https://acomsa.co.za/nieuwoudtville/van-zijl-guesthouses/>

Day 13 Heading north, stop somewhere near Namakwa National Park.

Day 14 To Springbok & Goegap Nature Reserve.



On the trail on top of Table Mountain



Walking in Kogelberg



Painting on Sevilla Rock Art Trail

- Day 15 North to Richtersveld. Different botanic environment.
- Day 16 Day trip in Richtersveld
- Day 17 To Fish River Lodge overlooking Fish River Canyon, west side
See <https://www.fishriverlodge-namibia.com/>
- Day 18 Day walk at Canyon. Choice of walks. We don't all have to do the same one.
We stayed at Fish River Lodge in 2016. One of the most spectacular settings for any hotel in the world. Dinner, bed & breakfast for two nights + day tour cost a bit over A\$400 per person in 2018.
- Day 19 Drive to Betta Camp. We stayed there in 2016. Chalets were great value as were their meals. See <https://bettacamp.com/>
- Day 20 Drive to Tok Tokkie & begin walk. Everything provided. All we need to carry is a day pack. See <http://www.toktokkietrails.com/>
- Day 21 On Tok Tokkie walk
- Day 22 Finish walk drive to Sesriem.
- Day 23 Sossuvlei (sand dune) visit. Optional balloon ride. Drive to Swakopmund.
- Day 24-25 Toward Etosha. If people are seriously interested in rock art, taking this much time will allow visits to several sites.
- Day 26 To Buschberg near Etosha.. I stayed at Buschberg in 2016. Very pleasant. <http://www.buschberg.com/>
- Day 27-28 In Etosha. On my last trip we stayed at Okaukuejo one night and Halali the next. Both have spotlit waterholes. Based on past experience, I think Okaukuejo is the better.
There are two or three smaller, more intimate (and more expensive camps). It might be good to spend a night in one of them. The western part of the park is only open to people staying in one of these camps. We could add an extra day here is desired.
- Day 29 Leave Etosha, head south to Windhoek.
- Day 30 Windhoek. Many things to see there.
- Day 31 A second long drive. Continue south to Kgalagadi. Enter via Mata Mata. Overnight there.
- Day 32 In Kgalagadi, see <https://www.sanparks.org/parks/kgalagadi/>
- Day 33 In Kgalagadi. At least one night should be at one of the wilderness camps.
- Day 34 Final night in Kgalagadi at Twee Rivieren.
- Day 35-36 On road toward Johannesburg. There are many interesting places to visit along the way. Adding a day to the original means that the drives are not too long.
- Day 37 Arrive Johannesburg in time for late afternoon flights.



Fish River Lodge Swim Pool & View



Desert breakfast on the Tok Tokkie walk



Etosha lions photo from our 2016 trip



Russell Willis with an abandoned ostrich egg spotted on a 4WD trek in Kgalagadi in 2007

Now for some details

Why use a Darwin-based firm for a South African tour?

We have been running regular trips to southern Africa since 2001. In all that time, we've never heard of anyone else offering tours like these. Transport during the trip will be primarily by rental cars but may include various forms of public transportation as well and, of course, your own feet while carrying a day pack.

Cape Town and Table Mountain

I've done the walk from Kirstenbosch to the cable car at least half a dozen times. It's a definite high point. High winds can close the cable car so it's possible that we'd have to walk both up and down. We'll probably spend a couple of hours at Kirstenbosch – if you are really keen on flowers, you could spend a day. If you are interested in a visit to Robben Island, it might be worth booking in advance. It was booked out on our 2017 trip.



Olifantsbos sunset, your nearest neighbour is 20 km away

Cape of Good Hope and Olifantsbos

Few people outside South Africa know what's on offer here. A wild place with a touch of luxury on the doorstep of one of the largest cities in the country. Everyone on our trips which stayed there thought this was a very special place. The one night isn't enough so we will spend two nights there as we did on some of our trips. You can see photos from the 2010 trip at

www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.475112561927.259424.205216266927&type=3

Kogelberg

This is one of the most botanically rich areas in the world. With luck, we'll do a botanic walk with Amida Johns, one of the two main authors of the South African Plant & Flower book for this region. (One of 11 volumes covering the country, no longer in print). Amida has done two walks for us. It would be hard to find anyone more knowledgeable. We will probably stay at the self-catering cottages at Kogelberg.

The Cedarberg

This is a must. I've been to different parts of the Cedarberg many times. Each time is different so I'd like to go back. Exactly what we do will be determined by the weather, the interests of the group and the vehicles we have available. In 2016, some of us did a great day walk that was possible only because we had two vehicles and some of those who didn't want to do the really long one were happy to do a shorter walk after dropping us off. We did another through walk, half of the group walking in each direction.



Approaching the Maltese Cross, Cedarberg day walk

For general park info about the Cedarberg, see

<http://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/cedarberg-wilderness-area/>

and <http://www.capenature.co.za/reserves/matjiesrivier-nature-reserve/>

The latter has a link to a beautiful, short time-lapse video. See if you can see the baboons.

We'll spend two nights in the southern to central Cedarberg before moving on to Travelers Rest and the Sevilla Rock Art Trail.

You can see a collection of Cedarberg photos from some of our earlier trips at

https://www.facebook.com/pg/bushwalkingholidays/photos/?tab=album&album_id=480036206927

Namaqualand Flowers and north to Springbok

Every year is different. In some years the flower display is amazing. In others, there isn't much at all. The photograph at right is somewhere in Namaqualand in a good year.

Niewoudtville is a bit of a detour but many flowers, bulbs and orchid species that are not found anywhere else in South Africa can be seen here. We were there in 2017 – a terrible year for flowers. Not one thing to be seen in the local botanic garden. But the nearby Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve is right at the edge of the escarpment and catches any moisture that might be coming past. We did an all day walk there and had plenty of flowers – as well as some amazing scenery. You can see a small gallery of photos from that walk at

https://www.facebook.com/pg/bushwalkingholidays/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10155564026996928

Click the photos and read the captions to find out more.

Richtersveld

The flora here is different from everywhere else on this trip. According to Wikipedia, “Approximately 4849 plant species, 40 percent of which are endemic, have been documented in the Richtersveld and comprise mainly succulent and aloe species. The area is home to a number of rather unusual plants, many of which are found nowhere else on earth.[5] Chief among these is the "Halfmensboom" (*Pachypodium namaquanum* Welw.) meaning "half-person tree", the name comes from the plant's resemblance to the human form.

These trees are revered by the indigenous Nama people as the embodiment of their ancestors, half human, half plant, mourning for their ancient Namibian home. Also found here are three endemic species of the tree aloe *Aloidendron*: *A. dichotomum*, *A. pillansii* and *A. ramosissimum*, often referred to as "kokerbooms" or "quiver trees".

We had an excellent guide for a day trip on our 2017 visit. We'll try and get him again.

For more information, two websites to look at are the Wikipedia Richtersveld page, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richtersveld> And the official South African National Parks Richtersveld page, <http://www.sanparks.org/parks/richtersveld/>

Fish River Canyon



On our half day walk overlooking the Fish River Canyon

The Fish River Canyon is one of the most spectacular places in southern Africa. The main canyon walk is a serious expedition in high temperatures. We plan to stop at the Fish River Lodge on the eastern, less visited side, of the canyon. In 2017, some of our group chose to do a full day walk all the way down to the river while the others opted for an easier half day walk, having lunch at the view point shown at left.

The photo at right shows one of our vehicles on the road north from Fish River Lodge. This is a typical



Namibian country road

Namibian country road.



Richtersveld landscape. It's an amazing place.

Tok Tokkie

This was one of the best finds I had on any of my trips to Africa, two full days and two nights wandering through the Namibian desert carrying only day packs.

We began with a visit to the NaDEET environmental education centre where they teach the locals how to make the best use of their limited resources. Solar cookers mean that a lot of trees don't need to get chopped down for firewood. Well worth supporting. You can find out more at <http://www.nadeet.org/nadeet-centre>



On the Tok Tokkie walk



Gemsbok on Tok Tokkie walk

We saw a variety of game, large and small. Our guide was able to point out many small things which we'd easily have missed on our own. The food was good and the campsites under the stars were wonderful. Here's a note from my diary at the time.

“Our wake up call was at 5:30, just as it was getting light. Hot water for a wash and a cup of tea or coffee brought to your bed (swag on a camp stretcher). Followed by breakfast, cereal, juice, cold meat, cheese, fruit. There were a few oryx (gemsbok) very close to the camp in the morning. They are the main large animal in the reserve.”



Tok Tokkie campsite at dawn

It's a wonderful experience, not to be missed.

Sossuvlei Dunes

The Sossusvlei dunes are probably the best known natural feature in Namibia. The two photos here were taken on our first trip here in 2003. As you can see, we do more than just look. We climb up and walk for a couple of hours so we can truly appreciate this incredible landscape. See

<http://www.sossusvlei.org/>



Sossusvlei Dunes



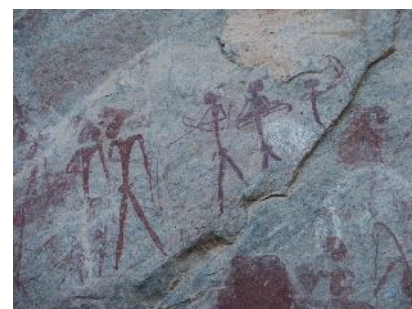
Climbing the dunes

On the 2016 trip, two of the group opted to do a dawn hot-air balloon ride over the desert instead of the walk at Sossusvlei. It cost close to A\$500 but it was an amazing experience. See <http://balloon-safaris.com/> if you want to find out more.

Swakopmund to Buschberg

Swakopmund is the second largest town in Namibia, a good place to replenish supplies. Buschberg is a guest farm just outside of Etosha. Comfortable accommodation, good food and they had some good, up to date advice on Etosha. I'm more than happy to go back.

There are a number of rock art sites more or less on the way from Swakopmund to Buschberg. We will visit a number of sites, which ones will depend on our exact route and what's available at the time.



Etosha

Namibia's largest park and one of the best places in Africa to see a variety of game. The photos here were all taken on our trips.



You can't get much closer to a leopard than we were when I took the first photo. We plan to spend one night at one of the camps in the western part of the park and another at Okaukuejo where the spotlit waterhole offers some tremendous viewing. We may add a third night at Halali or Namutoni on our way out of the park.

Etosha to Kgalagadi via Windhoek

From Etosha to the Mata Mata gate into the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is about a 12 hour drive. Windhoek, the capital and only major city in Namibia is about half way. We'll decide whether we stay in or near Windhoek closer to departure.

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park



The Mata Mata border crossing between Namibia and South Africa was closed for a number of years. Now that it's open, it gives us a great entry into the park. We'll spend the first night at the Mata Mata camp, two nights at other camps inside the park (at least one in a wilderness camp) and a final

night at Twee Rivieren. Depending on what's open and what people are interested in, we may or may not cross into Botswana. We plan to have two 4WD vehicles so we should be able to do most things. The two photos here were taken on our 2007 trip.

Kgalagadi to Johannesburg

We will work out our exact route and stops closer to departure.

What does it cost?

South Africa and Namibia are two of the few countries where the Australian dollar still goes a long way. Botswana tends to be more expensive. Our fee is \$1895. Our public liability insurance requires you to have your own travel insurance. It may sound like overkill, but I have heard of a case where the Travel Insurer sued a tour operator for something that happened that they had to cover.

The \$1895 covers the guide, who also acts as organiser and cook (assistance in self-catering locations gratefully accepted). In addition, you will have to pay your share of all the expenses for food, accommodation, transport, etc. The guide will pay the same fees and fares as everyone else and will keep these as low as reasonable comfort, reliability and availability will allow.

If exchange rates stay similar, our town accommodation should cost anywhere from about A\$20 to A\$50 (US\$15 to US\$40) per night. The relatively low cost of restaurant meals and the high quality of our accommodation have been one of the more pleasant aspects of our previous trips. The prices above were twin share in what would be considered three or four star establishments in Australia.

Based on our recent expenses, a **very rough** estimate of the cost follows. With luck, we'll be able to shave a bit off the total . If the Aussie dollar collapses against the rand, it will cost more. If it gains, it should cost less. We do not expect the whole trip to cost less than \$7000 or more than \$9000. This does not include any souvenir shopping you may do. We should have a more accurate estimate closer to departure. I suspect it will be higher as I haven't included the cost of any guided game park walks.

Return airfare	\$	2000	Breakfasts & lunches	\$	200
Walkabouts fee		1895	Your own travel insurance		300
Hire Car		1000	Restaurant meals		500
Other park & camping fees		400	<u>Accommodation</u>		<u>800</u>
Tok Tokkie		700	Approx Total		\$7800

What do you get for the fee?

You get expert advice on the things to bring, the probable weather, etc. You get someone who will handle the mundane details of making the travel arrangements, doing the food shopping for the walks, organising accommodation etc. You also get a small, like-minded group of people with whom you can share your experiences and expenses. Hiring a vehicle as part of a group costs far less than hiring it with only two or three.

Note 1. Some of what you get for your money is not very visible. Bushwalking in southern Africa is restricted. Permits have to be arranged well in advance all trails have strict limits. Some of our walks are in national parks run by a national authority. Some are in provincial parks. Some are in other areas. In past years, making these bookings took anywhere from ten minutes to three weeks depending on the agency involved. All that paperwork has to be done well in advance or we won't be able to do the walks as planned.

As another example, we will be doing a fair bit of self-catering. You might spend time relaxing or sightseeing while the guide goes out and hits the supermarkets, then spends an hour (or two or three) doing the final organising for the meals on the self-catering section. If you can't see the value in services like these, you are unlikely to feel that you are getting real value for your fee.

Note 2. Prices are subject to change.

Note 3. A large majority of those who have taken part in our overseas tours are Australian so all prices are quoted in Australian dollars. We have had several people from other countries take part by making their own travel arrangements to and from the start and finish points.

Note 4. All bushwalks and 4WD driving routes are subject to change due to weather conditions. If we get really foul weather at the start of a walk, we may wish to abort it, at least temporarily. If we get really foul weather later on, we may have to cut a route short. If a road is impassable, we may have to do a long detour.

What you don't get?

You do not get a guide who will hold your hand and make every decision for you. **You** must be prepared to take on a much greater degree of responsibility than on most other tours. All members of the group, including the guide, are expected to work together in establishing how the group will function, who will lead on the walks, who will look after the stragglers, etc.

A trip such as this cannot work unless everyone helps out. A few examples may help you understand just how important this is.

Accepting the responsibility that goes with a trip like this is part of the experience we offer. It is one of the things that sets our trips apart from the vast majority of "adventure" trips on the market. For those prepared to accept this responsibility, it makes the experience doubly rewarding. Those who are not prepared to accept such responsibility would be better off going on a "normal" tour.

Is it for you?

This trip is not for the average tourist. We can neither control nor predict the weather, only accept it as it comes. If you do not want to take the necessary responsibility and/or you cannot obtain the necessary equipment, it is not for you. Good physical fitness and a good mental attitude are both necessary. If you have never carried a pack on an overnight walk, have never walked off trail, have never camped in cold, windy and wet conditions, it will be harder for you to cope with the likely conditions than for a person who has had the relevant experience. Past experience has shown us that a fit, experienced 70 year old may cope better than a fitter 25 year old who does not have experience in coping with adverse conditions.

A Final Caution and a suggestion

Do not expect everything to run like clockwork. Such things often fail to happen in South Africa and Namibia. If you want to get maximum value for your money, you can go off and go sightseeing or simply relax while the guide does the food shopping or tries to organise or reconfirm hiking permits, etc. Or, if you wish, you are welcome to join him or her while (s)he does these things.

There may be occasional days between sections where you will be left to your own devices while the guide slows down and relaxes a bit and catches up on the organising. Based on past experience, things will run more smoothly if the guide does this.

Conditions

1. A deposit of \$500 is payable on booking. This will be refunded in full if five people have not booked by mid May. Final payment is due by 30 April.
2. Our cancellation fees are \$500 before 30 April, \$1000 before 31 May and the full \$1895 after that. The different African authorities with whom we make bookings all have their own cancellation fees. If you cancel after we have made and paid for a booking on your behalf, you will lose whatever is non-refundable as well as our cancellation fee.
3. All participants are responsible for obtaining the necessary passport and visas and must have some form of travel insurance. **We need to see proof of your travel insurance before departure.** We need this because of our own insurance.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Russell Willis

Update: 23/12/18 Some of the places we had planned to include in the itinerary are already booking out. Kgalagadi is one of the most problematic so we are already looking at a variety of alternatives. Here's some info from one of our former clients.

A few more thoughts on juggling your trip:

If Kgalagadi is the main attraction on your route back to Joburg from Etosha, and accommodation there proves impossible, you could provide a different highlight by heading east from Etosha to Popa Falls, spend a day in Mahango NP (another little jewel of a place for bird and animal freaks), cross over into Botswana (there is now an ATM in Shakawe to get some pula) and down the main road parallel to the Okavango (staying at Drotskys Cabins (<https://drotskys.com/>) adds a touch of luxury, but we also stayed at the basic campsite at Nguma Island Lodge (<http://www.ngumalodge.com/activities.html>),

We had an excellent day there in a "dugout canoe" or mokoro exploring the Okavango with a guide - we asked him which wood they used for the canoes, and he sized us up to see if we would prefer the truth or the tourist tale, and finally said they're acrylic/polyester resin, but they certainly looked genuine!). We ran out of food there but there was a restaurant - as we were the only guests the young ladies asked us in the morning what we would like to eat, basically chicken or other meat. We weren't expecting too much, as we were miles from anywhere, right out in the bush. Well, they served us a really delicious meal of chicken drenched in a succulent honey-based sauce - much.much better than we had ever hoped.

Optional detour to the Tsodilo Hills if time permits. Then it's probably straight on to Ghanzi (possibly overnight somewhere near there in a Khoisan-run lodge/campsite such as <http://www.dqae.org/>. We didn't stay in the main lodge, which was being renovated, but they let us wild-camp out in the boondocks free of charge) and the long road towards Lobatse and Joburg, with a final optional stop at Pilanesberg (<https://www.pilanesbergnationalpark.org/>). Your total driving distance would probably be less than the Etosha-Kgalagadi-Joburg route, the extra car insurance/border crossing documentation for Botswana is only about 1000 rand per vehicle, and the scenery would be quite different too, from the lush riverine forest near the Okavango to the semi-desert of central Botswana.

I have done some of the bits suggested and would be happy to repeat them and add a few new ones.

In any case, **flexibility** is the key. If you want a precise itinerary before you book, this is not the trip for you as we can't start the booking process until we have the bookings to do so.

Dates. To fit one of the people who wants to book, we can't finish after 27 September. I can't get away from the office before about 15 August. At this point, I expect to start in Cape Town sometime between 16 & 20 August and finish at the Johannesburg airport sometime between 22 & 27 September.