

ReitSafari HorseTrails - Damaraland-Skeleton Coast Trail

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▶ Introduction

This is a truly exceptional trail: where else can you expect to see elephant, giraffe and rhino in a desert habitat! And you will be surprised at how they have adapted. Damaraland is a very spectacular part of the country, almost inaccessible, with amazing colours and vast open spaces, ancient craters and remnants from prehistoric times, not to mention the forbidding Skeleton Coast. We may encounter elephant, rhino, cheetah or plains game or be caught by rivers in flood, all of which combines into a tremendous adventure. Each and every Damaraland Trail so far has been an experience of a lifetime!

Details:

Windhoek – Windhoek. 6 1/2 riding days, 9 nights, ½ day sightseeing famous rock engravings at Twyfelfontein (World Heritage Site), Burnt Mountain, Organ Pipes, 2 days transfer

Conditions:

As with our other trails you have to be physically fit as well as fit to ride; you should have a good sense of humor and extensive riding experience. You will spend six to eight hours in the saddle every day; all paces.

▶ Itinerary

Day 1: On arrival you will be met at the airport by a representative of River Crossing Lodge and taken to the lodge located in a game reserve high overlooking Windhoek for lunch depending on your arrival time. Please pass on your flight details so we can make those arrangements for you. The afternoon can be spent at leisure by the pool or there is an option to take a sundowner ride or visit Windhoek, a charming small city. In the evening you will have dinner with the group hosted by Sarah Jane Gullick or one of ReitSafari representatives.

Day 2: Windhoek to Damaraland - As soon as everybody is on board we head north and stop for a picnic at the Petrified Forest, or close to Burnt mountain, before driving on to Twyfelfontein. Meet the horses and crew and settle in at Aba Huab Camp, which has highly inventive constructions set up by the local community. Afternoon sundowner ride to try out your horse. In the evening there will be stories and lots of excitement around the campfire: will the elephants pass through at night?

Day 3: After a leisurely breakfast. – morning ride in the very scenic famous Twyfelfontein game viewing area. The afternoon is for sightseeing and a walk among the famous rock engravings of Twyfelfontein. Enjoy the spectacular views of Damaraland and relax until it is time for dinner and another great evening at the campfire.

Day 4: From Aba Huab we ride across endless plains to Rendezvous and after lunch continue along the Aba Huab River to De Riet. This is where the nerve tingling starts: we have no idea where the elephants are and whether we might bump into them just around the next bend. The desert dwelling elephant have adapted their eating and drinking habits so that they can survive in the desert environment and can only be found in this part of Namibia.



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Day 5: We continue along the Huab River and across another plain towards Mikberg (where we saw cheetahs last time) to have lunch at the 'cheetah tree', followed by a long afternoon ride through fascinating scenery. Our camp is pitched at View Point where we enjoy the views and dramatic colours of Brandberg, Namibia's highest mountain, and Doros Crater.

Day 6: From View Point we turn southwest towards the Ugab River. After lunch at Lion Head we set off for a nice long canter. Later we move through a very narrow gorge, pass Soutfontein (Salt Fountain) and arrive at the Rhino Trackers' Camp near Brandberg West. Keep your fingers crossed that our truck has managed the long way from Aba Huab via Uis in time! Extraordinary driving skills and extra strong nerves are needed for the challenge of taking trucks and trailers through the gorge in one piece. It is only when you fly over this landscape (preferably after the trail!) that you realize how spectacular it really is. Meet the trackers of the Save the Rhino Fund and perhaps see a slide show on request.

Day 7: Here we have alternative routes depending on game movements and weather conditions. Usually we ride out of the Ugab River onto the wide open plains and into a deserted gorge described as "out of this world". Or: through reeds and lion bush thickets we make our way along the Ugab to Brakwasser, another place of brackish water, frequented by elephants. We then turn southeast, away from the Ugab River, and move through another narrow gorge. Whichever: camp is very enjoyable: shady, sheltered and special!

Day 8: We leave the Ugab tributary and enter another vast open plain with spectacular views of Brandberg and Doros Crater. The crater exploded millions of years ago, and the purplish rocks around us are a result of the horrendous blast. We enjoy some marvelous cantering and have lunch at Klippenberg where you can pick up some gemstones. Our camp is at Cross Roads.



Day 9: We are on our way towards the Messum River. Again there are open plains and happy canters - and spectacular panoramas. In the afternoon we arrive at the Atlantic at Mile 108 where there is the opportunity to ride bare back for the last time – along the beach!! This unpredictable shore is called the Skeleton Coast and the infamous easterly wind can either cause the temperatures warm enough for a swim or maybe whip up a sandstorm! We then drive to our overnight accommodation at either Swakopmund or Henties bay depending on availability. Last evening meal together.

Day 10: For those returning back to Windhoek there may be time (depending on your flight departure) to take part in one of the many exciting activities available in Swakopmund such as dolphin cruise, scenic flight over the area which we rode, sand boarding, sky diving, quad biking etc. Later you catch the schedule bus transfer to Windhoek and then connect with a taxi to take you back to Windhoek airport.

Many choose to stay on a few days extra at Swakopmund in order to try many of the activities offered and then catch the bus a few days later. We are happy to help you pre book these activities as especially in school holiday periods they often get booked up well in advance.

Take note: Routes can be changed due to unpredictable weather and other unforeseen conditions!

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► Trail Dates and Costs

Trail Dates for 2010:

01.07.2010 – 10.07.2010

Costs: **€ 3.200,00 (includes 15% Value Added Tax)**

Included: Transfer from Windhoek airport and first night accommodation. DBB. Transfer to Aba Huab Camp and visit to Twyfelfontein rock engravings, full board + drinks throughout the trail, scenic drive to Messum River. DBB at Henties Bay or Swakopmund. Scheduled bus transfer from Swakopmund to Windhoek and taxi to Windhoek airport.

Excluded: Souvenirs; tips for local guides and crew; Riding at River Crossing – Windhoek. Drinks at River Crossing and Swakopmund/ Henties Bay. Any extra days and all extra activities at Swakopmund.

► Terms and Conditions

Terms of Payment:

We confirm your reservation after payment of 30% of the total price into our Reitsafari Acc.:

ReitSafari's banking details:

ReitSafari Horse Trails
Account No. 24099 0439
Standard Bank Main Branch
Branch Code 08237200
SWIFT Code SBN MNA NX
261 Independence Avenue
Private bag 13177 Windhoek

Please forward the receipt of your transfer slip as well as the completed booking form by fax or mail; The balance is to be paid one month before the trail starts. In the case of a cancellation on your side we are not liable for refund of your deposit. Changes of routes are possible due to circumstances beyond our control.

As we are not liable for any loss, damage or injury on your side, your travel insurance must include accident, health cover and emergency rescue.

► General Information

Horses and Saddles:

"One of each breed", i.e. Arab, Haflinger, Trakehner, ranch horses, even cross-breeds of the famous wild horses of the Namib Desert; they are small to medium-sized (14.3 to 16 hands) sure-footed horses raised on rough terrain, some of them with experience in endurance riding, and every one of them a kind, reliable companion that deserves the very best treatment and care. We use comfortable equitation and Western-style saddles to properly fit the horse as well as the rider.

Terrain and Distance:

Rocky hills and riverbeds, gravel plains – at times the going is tough and difficult. On average we cover 20-40 km a day, spending six to eight hours in the saddle. Pace depends on terrain and temperatures as well as on fitness and weight of riders. Walk, trot, canter and gallop. Because Namibia has such wide-open spaces it is possible to accommodate up to 15 riders on a trail plus 2 - 3 riding guides.

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Camping:

Large dome-shaped tents (two participants sharing) with camp beds and swags (canvas bedrolls) consisting of lambskin, duvet or quilt and pillow; folding chairs, hot showers. Luggage is transported on trucks; the riders ride across bush or desert as the crow flies and meet the back-up vehicles at campsites. Camp is pitched at sunset; meals are prepared on the open fire, usually a 'braai' or 'potjie' (casserole) - typically Namibian and often a surprise.

Equipment:

Bring a warm sleeping bag as nights can be very cold (can be hired in advance if required), a set of warm clothes including a jacket or all-weather coat (for the occasional cold front,), a wide-brimmed hat, a woolly hat, a windcheater, a warm sweater, 2 neckerchiefs, long-sleeved shirts, sun lotion, 2 pairs sunglasses on strings, at least 3 changes of comfortable riding clothes (tried and trusted sportswear rather than brand-new fashionable jeans), short riding boots/trainers/chaps/mini-chaps according to preference, leisure wear, towel, water bottle, torch, gloves, moon bag, lip balm, talcum powder, a small overnight bag for everything you need for 2 days, sufficient batteries for cameras and spare memory card. We strongly recommend riding caps (riding without protective headgear is at your own risk).

Conditions:

Fitness, good health, experience in horse riding and handling horses are essential. You need not be an accomplished dressage rider or show jumper, but you must feel totally at ease on the back of a cantering horse; and be prepared for the riding adventure of your life!

We have a weight limit of 85 kg - anyone heavier will need to pay a 30% surcharge for an extra horse as recommended by the World Horse Welfare (ILPH International League for Protection of Horses).

► **Contact us**

We also offer to handle or help with other travel arrangements around our country.
Non-riding companions are welcome to join the trucks.

Please let us know, if you need some more details.

ReitSafari Horse Trails

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NAMIBIA

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