

ReitSafari HorseTrails - Namib Desert Trail

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▶ Introduction

Namib Desert Trail

Crossing the oldest desert in the world on horseback is an experience of central Namibia's spectacularly fascinating contrasts: from Khomas Hochland Mountains and escarpment to the Kuiseb Canyon, Tinkas, Tumas and Welwitschia plains, Moon Valley, seasonal Swakop River, coastal dunes and Atlantic Ocean. An experience of a lifetime!

Details:

Windhoek to Swakopmund: 12 days, 11 nights, 1 night in Windhoek, 1 night on the ranch, 9 days riding (400 km from the central highlands to the Atlantic Ocean. Last night at Swakopmund.

Conditions:

Since this is one of the toughest trails in the world you have to be physically fit as well as fit to ride; you should have a good sense of humor and extensive riding experience. Six to eight hours in the saddle per day, all paces.

▶ Itinerary

Day 1: You will be met by the River Crossing Lodge at the airport and take to the lodge located in a game reserve high overlooking Windhoek for lunch depending on your arrival time. The afternoon can be spent at leisure by the pool or take a sundowner ride or visit Windhoek, a charming small city. In the evening you will have dinner with the group and hosted by SJG or one of ReitSafari representatives.

Day 2: You will leave with the group to Farm Hakos 1-2 hours drive southwest to a guest farm, where you spend the first night. You are introduced to your riding guides and fellow-riders, do a short trial ride, acquaint yourself with the awesome terrain and have supper and a good night's sleep.

Day 3: We start off on our riding adventure: cross-country on game and cattle tracks through the bush savannah of the central highlands (1500-2000 m above sea level) towards the escarpment, where the highlands drop into the plains with stunning views of endless hills and steep rock faces in constantly changing colours. Unbelievable where horses can go – riding not for the faint-hearted! An easy descent takes us to the campsite where our back-up vehicles are waiting. After a good meal, cooked on the campfire, some jokes and chatting about the day's events you retire to your tent or sleep under the stars.

Day 4: A long and exerting, but particularly memorable day awaits us! We ride over the Hakos Mountains (2000 m), along dry riverbeds and on the tracks of mountain zebra, oryx and baboons, past leopard caves and thorn bushes. This is pristine countryside with stunning panoramic views... and you are sure to appreciate a hot shower and a good meal at the end of this day! Our camp is at Natas, another remote and rugged Namibian cattle farm.



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Day 5: First we venture into the shaft of a long-forgotten gold mine not far from our camp; then do a short ride (20 km) along dirt roads to the red sand dunes of Rooisand on the fringe of the Namib Desert. In the early afternoon we arrive at our campsite, beautifully situated at the foot of Gamsberg, the third highest mountain in Namibia. Just before sunset we might hike to a natural shelter on the mountain nearby to see Bushman paintings.

Day 6: We ride through the semi-desert between the Gaub and Kuiseb valleys; past remote, abandoned farms towards the Namib-Naukluft Park's (500 000 ha) main entrance.

Day 7: We enter the largest nature conservation area in Africa (an area as large as the British Isles). The Skeleton Coast Park, Namib Naukluft Park and Sperrgebiet extend along Namibia's entire coastline (2000km) up to a width of some 100 km. We ride through the bizarre Kuiseb Canyon and alongside its banks and camp at Aruvlei, an interesting oasis in the Namib. Marvel at the incredibly beautiful African sunset and myriads of stars.

Day 8: A long, tough riding day and non-stop sunshine! See mountain zebra, oryx, ostrich, springbok and if your lucky some of the desert warthogs while crossing the desert's gravel plains as the crow flies. For our lunch break we stop at Ganab, a borehole that provides much-needed water for the game in the desert. Then we are off again, to Hotsas (Tinkas and Tumas plains). After the considerable distance that we have covered that day, our camp with the prospect of chilled drinks and a relaxed dinner is a particularly welcome sight.

Day 9: We canter happily towards Poacher's Turn and Marble Mountains, encountering strange shapes and mirages, fascinating survival devices of desert adapted creatures, infinite space and tremendous solitude.



Day 10: Continue through unspoilt, true desert landscape where you will see unique Welwitschia plants. Close to the coast we enter the spectacular Moon Valley. It is our last night on the trail and we camp out under the stars, around the campfire in the dry riverbed of the Swakop near Goanikontes.

Day 11: Joyfully ride along the Swakop valley until you reach the dunes and then at last the ocean shore at Swakopmund. Our first glimpse of a town in ten days! And the possibility of riding your horse for the last time – bareback along the beach!! For the night we stay in comfortable holiday chalets/guest house and our horses enjoy their well-deserved rest in cozy stables. We meet for a farewell diner in the evening.

Day 12: 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.

Activities available include a lagoon cruise - with oysters and champagne as well as seals on board, sand boarding, skydiving, quad biking, sand boarding etc.

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

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► Trail Dates and Costs

Trail Dates for 2010:

05.04.2010 - 16.04.2010

12.08.2010 - 23.08.2010

31.08.2010 - 11.09.2010

04.10.2010 - 15.10.2010

Costs: € 3,200.00 (includes 15% Value Added Tax)

Included: Transfer from Windhoek airport to River Crossing lodge for first night and transfer from River Crossing to guest farm/starting point of trail; full board at lodge. Good ReitSafari fare and drinks on the trail and well as comfortable accommodation and full board for last night at Swakopmund. Transfer back to Windhoek on scheduled buses and taxi transfer to Windhoek airport.

Excluded: Souvenirs; tips for local guides and crew; Riding or other tours at River Crossing. Extra nights and all activities in Swakopmund e.g. dolphin cruise or desert quad biking; Flights from Swakopmund to Windhoek or elsewhere.

► 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

...and receipt of your transfer slip as well as the completed booking form by fax or mail;

The balance is to be paid before the trail starts. In the case of a cancellation with your side we are not liable for refund of your deposit. Changes of dates and 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 should 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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