

NAMIBIA 2026 – TRIP REPORT

05/08/2026 to 25/08/2026



Driver –
Co-driver -
Navigator -

Malcolm Collis
Lyndsey McGuire
Lily McGuire

Vehicle Make: Iveco Model: Discoverer 6 Motor Home

Hired from Bobo Campers (Trans Kalahari Inn Lodge B6 Highway, Kapps Farm, Windhoek 0026461229918 through Ideal Travel SA)

Registration: LJ87JL GP

Odometer Start: 117461km Odometer End: 120578km
TOTAL 3117km (1937miles)

Total Fuel: 377 litres (83 gallons [UK]) Fuel Consumption: 12.11 litres/100km (23.33mpg)

Camper Hire Total costs for 18 Days: Rand ZAR55370 (£2530) + ancillaries

Fuel Costs: N\$9885 (£457) Average Cost per litre N\$25.89 (£1.20)

FLIGHTS OUTBOUND

Wednesday 5 August 2026 LGW North

EK10 Airbus A380 LGW to DXB departs 21:45 Wednesday 5th August (Actual 22:10) arrived 07:39 (Scheduled 08:30)

EK763 Airbus A380 DXB to JNB departs 10:05 **Thursday 6th August** (Actual 10:40) arrived 16:25 (Scheduled 16:25)

EK4129 Embraer E195 JNB to WDH departs 17:35 **Thursday 6th August** (Actual 17:50) Arrives WDH 19:45 (Actual 19:30)

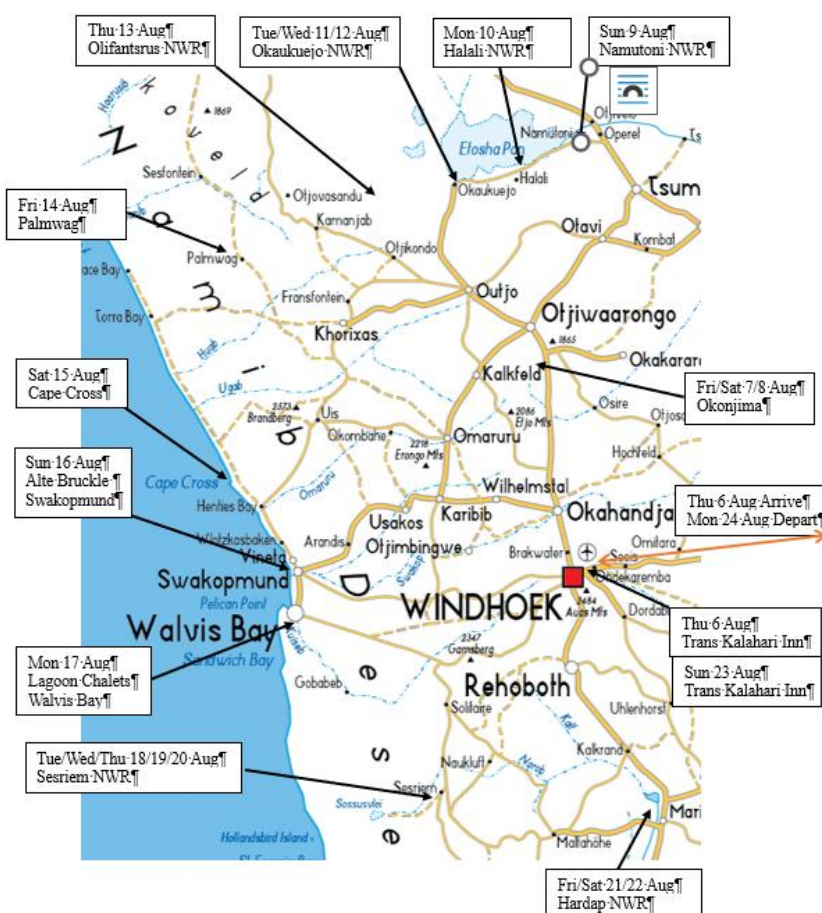
FLIGHTS INBOUND

Monday 24 August 2026 WDH EK4162 Embraer E170 to JNB departs 18:20 (Actual 18:15) arrived 19:53 (Scheduled 20:10)

EK766 Boeing 777 JNB to DXB departs 22:20 (Actual 22:49) arrived **Tuesday 25th August** 08:17 (Scheduled 08:20)

EX069 Airbus A350 DXB to LGW departs 16:40 (Actual 16:59)

Arrives **Tuesday 25th August** LGW North 21:30 (Actual 21:12)



DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY
Wed 05/08/2026	To Gatwick North Long Stay Car Park LGW Depart 21:45	Via Dubai & Johannesburg
Thu 06/08/2026	Arrive WDH 19:45 (Hopefully) Trans Kalahari Inn (Room)	Collection by Hotel
Fri 07/08/2026	Okonjima NR & Camping Home - Okonjima	Collect BoBo Camper 18 Nights Shopping Windhoek – to Okonjima
Sat 08/08/2026	Okonjima	Game drives “Booked” Leopard Tracking & Rare Species Game Drive
Sun 09/08/2026	Namutoni NWR Etosha Namutoni Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Self-drive Game Drives Namibia Etosha National Park
Mon 10/08/2026	Halali NWR Etosha Halali Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Self-drive Game Drives
Tue 11/08/2026	Okaukuejo NWR Etosha Okaukuejo Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Self-drive Game Drives
Wed 12/08/2026	Okaukuejo NWR	Rest Day?
Thu 13/08/2026	Olifantsrus NWR Olifantsrus Campsite - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Self-drive Game Drives
Fri 14/08/2026	Palmwag PALMWAG CAMPSITE	Possible Rhino walk?
Sat 15/08/2026	Cape Cross https://www.capecross.org/	Visit fur seal colony Namibia Cape Cross Seal Reserve
Sun 16/08/2026	Alte Brücke Swakopmund Home Alte Brücke	Exploring the old German town of Swakopmund.
Mon 17/08/2026	Lagoon Chalets Walvis Bay Home - Lagoon Chalets & Camping	Exploring town & salt production To Sesriem over Tropic of Capricorn
Tue 18/08/2026	Sesriem NWR Sesriem Campsite - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Scenic drive – Sossusvlei Dunes; some of the highest in the world Sossusvlei Namibia - Travel Site
Wed 19/08/2026	Sesriem NWR	Sunrise Balloon Ride Namib Sky - Balloon Safaris in Namibia
Thu 20/08/2026	Sesriem NWR	Sunrise in dunes + Scenic drive
Fri 21/08/2026	Hardap NWR Hardap Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts	Boat ride?
Sat 22/08/2026	Hardap NWR	To Windhoek
Sun 23/08/2026	Trans Kalahari Inn - Camping	Clean out camper
Mon 24/08/2026	Return Camper WDH Depart 18:20	Lift to Airport by Camper hire company
Tue 25/08/2026	Arrive LGW 21:30 Collect car from Car Park	

FLIGHTS x3 EMIRATES		£3717
VISAS eVisa x3	N\$4944	£230
TOTAL ACCOMMODATION/CAMPING: 3 pax	N\$26321	£1210
NWR PARK ENTRANCE & CONSERVATION FEES	N\$8420	£390
CAMPER HIRE TOTAL	N\$56450	£2580
FUEL (377) litres	N\$9885	£457
ACTIVITIES TOTAL	N\$42560	£1969
MEALS TOTAL		£460
SHOPPING TOTAL		£542
TRIP TOTAL APPROX.		£11500

FACTS

Sunrise Windhoek	06/08/2026: 07.22	24/08/2026: 07.09
Sunset Windhoek	06/08/2026: 18.32	24/08/2026: 18.39

Moon Phases & Moonrise & Moonset times August 2026

06/08/2026 Third Quarter (Half Moon):	Rises 00:59	Sets 12:08
12/08/2026 New Moon	Rises 07:03	Sets 18:27
20/08/2026 First Quarter (Half Moon)	Rises 12:01	Sets 01:07
28/08/2026 Full Moon	Rises 19:05	Sets 07:08

Currency at time of trip – The Rand [R] and Namibian Dollar [N\$] have parity and are freely interchanged although change will be given in N\$. R/N\$10 = 45 pence: R/N\$200 = £9: £1 = R/N\$22: £10 = R/N\$220 [UAE Dirham 10AED = £2: £1 = 5AED]

Namibian Time Zone – Central African Time Zone. 1 hour ahead at time of visit. (e.g. 10.00 Namibia is 09.00 UK time)

Namibia at 825,000km² is 3½ times bigger than the UK (243,000km²). It is 1498km top to bottom and 880km across, excluding the Caprivi Strip (another 400km long).

It has a population of 2.541m (2020) (UK 67.22m 2020) and a population density of 3 per km² (UK 281 per km²), one of the lowest in the world.

Etosha National Park at 22,270km² is larger than Wales (20,779km²).

Bordered by: Angola in the north for 1376km; Zambia in the extreme east for 233km; Botswana in the east for 1360km; South Africa in the south for 855km and Zimbabwe for a few metres where Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana & Namibia all meet on the Zambezi River – the only quadripoint in the world where four countries all meet. Namibia has a 1572km Atlantic coastline.

Highest point; 2573 metres (nearly 8,500 feet) at Königstein in the Brandberg Mountains in the north-west of the country.

Capital City Windhoek. Population: 446,000 as of 2021 (doubled since 2001)

Official Language - English with Afrikaans, German & several other tongues also spoken

Formerly South-West Africa.

Since April 2025, UK Nationals, and many other countries, require a visa to visit. This can be done in advance as an eVisa or on arrival – we did the three of us electronically; both the eVisa and on-arrival cost about £75 but doing it beforehand saved a wait in the lengthy queue at immigration. This appears to have been introduced in retaliation for the UK imposing visa requirements on Namibian citizens, so you cannot blame them but I wonder if this has had an effect on tourism - throughout the trip it was very apparent that the majority of tourist were either French, Italian or Spanish, with very few Brits.

BUILD UP TO TRIP

In 2009/2010 Judi & Malcolm Collis shipped their expedition prepared Land Rover Defender TD5 110 to Cape Town and spent one year journeying 50,000km around southern Africa. One grandchild joined them in Zambia; the others were too young. We always said they would take out the others but unfortunately Judi, granny, died in 2019. Not long after, an invitation to visit Africa was offered and accepted by 14-year-old, 16 by the time we got there, grandson Joseph McGuire and we eventually managed to visit Namibia in July 2022, having been delayed twice thanks to the Covid pandemic.

A similar offer was extended to the youngest grandchild, Lily McGuire to visit Africa in 2026 when she would be 14, coming up 15. Again, Namibia was chosen as the safest option with brilliant wildlife opportunities and daughter, Lily's mother, was also invited.

My days of scrambling on vehicle roofs to put up and down tents were, as far as I was concerned, over, so I decided to take the soft option of hiring a six-berth motorhome camper out of Windhoek.

Two flights options seemed the obvious choices; BA to Johannesburg and over to Windhoek, as I had done in 2022, or Ethiopian Airlines to Addis Adaba then direct to Windhoek, having used the airline to get to Botswana in 2023: that was until I came to book them. BA wanted over £10k and Ethiopian, who had been the cheapest, doubled their prices come August and were twice what Emirate Airlines wanted, albeit for a convoluted route. So, for £3472 for the three of us, we booked LGW London Gatwick to DXB Dubai to JNB Johannesburg to WDH Windhoek. It would be a long flight with a couple of tight lay-overs and a very long lay-over in Dubai on the way back, but saved a lot of money. All was looking good until the USA decided to bomb Iran end of February 2026 and destabilised the whole region – images of drone attacks on Dubai Airport didn't help things although I did assure Lily it would be all over before our trip ... how wrong I was.

The airline started up flying soon after the start of the war and seemed to be sticking, more or less, to schedule; important as the DXB to JNB couldn't afford to be late, what with a tight lay-over. Nearer the time, subtle tweaks were made to the schedule leading to an anxious few weeks.

The big day when daughter Lyndsey McGuire, granddaughter Lily McGuire and I were to head for Africa had arrived.

DAY 1 - Wednesday 5 August 2026

Arrived without drama at London Gatwick North Terminal Long Stay Car Park in good time for our scheduled Emirates 21:45 EK10 flight to Dubai DXB on an A380 Airbus. Knowing that we needed a quick getaway in Johannesburg JNB and having flown a couple of times on an A380 Airbus I had already booked lower deck seats right at the front by the exit door. Days before flying I was informed of a flight change on the first leg; not the take-off time but the landing time had been extended by an hour, now meaning the Dubai stop over could be tight. For £4 each I booked 3 seats second row, the same ones already booked on the second leg (all 10 paying seats in the front row, not cheap, were empty on both flights!) so we could exit swiftly. We took off at 22:10, 25 minutes after scheduled departure.

DAY 2 - Thursday 6th August 2026

We arrived next early morning at 07:39, well ahead of the scheduled 08:30, giving us time to wander around Dubai Airport – not as big as I would have imagined. It was the next leg which was time critical as the stop over time at JNB initially was only 1 hour 20 minutes but that had been changed to 1 hour 10 minutes. Emirates assured me that would be fine even though we would have to exit Terminal A International into Domestic Terminal B, even though Namibia is not South Africa, pass through Passport control and then security, which could be busy.

EK763, another Airbus A380 didn't leave until 10:40, 35 minutes late and we had already resigned ourselves to an overnighter in Johannesburg – we did, however, land bang on schedule at 16:25. When the doors eventually opened, they blocked our exit to allow the First Class passengers down the central stairway as there was a problem with the upper deck doors. The steward tried to get us all to reverse and use the exit further down the plane: my remonstrations worked and we were off and running. Only a few at the Passport check and with a stamp we were off again ... and joined the long queues for security checks. Fortunately, Lyndsey heard an official fast-tracking a passenger on the Windhoek flight and spoke to her and we were away, past the queues, to the scanning machine, apologising profusely to the other passengers. It was then quite some way to get to our gate which was empty by the time we got there, but still open. We weren't the last and waited on the bus for a few more before making our way out to the Embraer. We finally boarded Airlink/Emirates EK4129 and took off about 25 minutes late – I honestly didn't think this was going to happen!

We all had to fill in two long arrivals forms each, even though we had eVisas. We were flying into the setting sun so had an extended sunset most of the way. We landed a bit ahead of schedule and were quickly through Immigration with our eVisas and papers for Lily (nobody ever asked for the forms we filled in on the plane!).

Out to the luggage carousel and waited – this was all going far too well. We had been there probably 15 minutes watching others collect their bags, when a chap came up to me and said, “Mr Collis” – I thought he may have been our driver, but no, he broke the news that whilst we were in Windhoek, our bags were still in Johannesburg. Obviously a common occurrence, given the large pile of bags around the lost baggage counter, we reported our loss and hoped they would arrive on the early morning flight.

Outside, Epsom was holding up a sign for us to take us the 20km to the Trans Kalahari Inn where we were staying prior to collecting the camper next morning.

We checked in but passed on an evening meal and instead made our way to our triple lodge for an early night. Fortunately, we had come prepared with a change of clothes, just in case.

Trans Kalahari Inn, [Home - Transkalahari Inn](#) Plot 10, Kappsfarm 65 Windhoek

Room Cost: N\$1857 (£85 inc. drinks, wood.) Airport Shuttle x2 3 persons N\$1320 (£60)

DAY 3 – Friday 7 August 2026

Trans Kalahari Inn to Okonjima

Daily kilometres: 251km

To: Okonjima Africat Reserve [Okonjima Campsites - Okonjima](#)

Altitude Windhoek: 1656m – Altitude Okonjima 1525m

Camp fees: N\$6780 (£311) 3 pax 2 nights – park fee included

Leopard tracking + Night Drive: N\$4800 + N\$4800 = N\$9600 (£441)

Up early with, hopefully, a busy day ahead of us. After a quick breakfast the manager phoned the airport and to our delight, our bags had come in on the early flight. A shuttle was arranged to get us to and from the airport and up turned Epsom. Reunited with all three bags, it was back to Trans Kalahari complex, spotting the first trip mammals, Chacma Baboons, but being dropped off at the Bobo Campers compound where our six berth motorhome awaited us.

We were taken through the various features; with table leg removed when we said we would leave the rear bed down and some of the cushions were also removed when we said the middle bed wouldn't be made into a double [unfortunately the wrong ones went, meaning Lyndsey ended up with a less than satisfactory bed set up]. Our ordered extras were on board, electric kettle, braai grill & extra blankets. I was fine with the vehicle having owned a similar camper in the UK and I was used to automatics. With both our IDP licences handed over and paperwork signed, the extras put on the card and we were ready to roll. As always, I had gone for the full cover – not cheap but for peace of mind, well worth it. Google maps worked well through the vehicle screen (I had also downloaded off-line maps) and we were off. The tank read half full (half empty!!) and was to be returned likewise.



First port of call was a supermarket, Spar, in Windhoek to stock up on essentials, salt and pepper for example, and a few days' worth of meals, not really knowing what to expect at the next campsite [Just as well as we were miles from the restaurant].

I ignored my own African rule of never pass a garage and looked for one on my side of the road. The next thing I knew, we are out of Windhoek heading north on the B1, which looked new, built by China no doubt [there is now a brand new dual carriageway out to the airport, curtesy of the Chinese].

I wasn't too worried as I knew there was a big garage not too far up where Joseph and I had filled in 2022 – on and on we went with the gauge steadily dropping until finally it dawned on me that the new road now bypassed the junction with the garage – bugger.

By the time we reached the turn into the Okonjima we were in the red and quite some way from the next town, and we still had 20km to get into the park and our campsite. Fortunately, the gate guard said I could buy fuel here – relief all over as I had visions of spending the rest of the holiday here waiting to get fuel.

We passed through a couple of more manned gates and were given directions to follow signs for the PAWS campsite, passing giraffe, kudu, impala, steenbok, warthog, guineafowl and Chacma baboons, one of which we stopped to watch as he squeezed through the narrow strands



of the fence. We were met by a chap on an electric bike who told us to follow him. Off we went upwards up a rough track, worthy of a 4x4 truck rather than my two-wheel drive large camper, and bumped our way to our selected campsite called Chilala. What a brilliant site: undercover kitchen, braai areas, wi-fi, remote toilets x2 and remote showers x2.

Alfonso would be looking after us and we arranged for a leopard tracking session in the morning and a night drive later that day.

We walked up the path to the sunset view point and as darkness fell, out came the stars – Southern Cross and Scorpio being obvious plus a wonderful Milky Way.

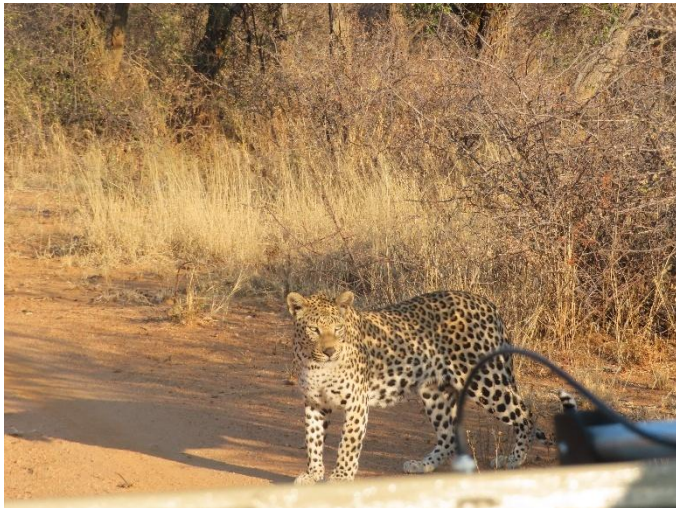
On with the fire, using their supplied wood, and on with the T-bone steaks while Lyndsey cooked the veg on the gas cooker in the camp kitchen. We sat around for a while but with a 6 am alarm set it was time to try out the beds – mine was fine; Lyndsey's not so; and Lily was up in the overhead bed, plenty of space but not much headroom.



DAY 4 – Saturday 8 August 2026
Okonjima Africat Reserve

Up with the 6am alarm to get ready for 7pm collection for our Leopard Tracking experience. Lily had been warned there would be some early starts and she was with us, in body if not in spirit.

The open safari Toyota, aren't they all, turned up on time with one couple in the back, another couple in the middle and we three in the row behind Alfeus, and off we bounced. As expected, the day started cold and we had wrapped up accordingly. We hadn't gone far when he stopped and gave us a briefing and then scanned with his antennae – surprisingly he picked up a signal straightaway and theatrically made a deal of it, even though he clearly knew the area the leopard would be. Being a private reserve, he wasn't restricted to the tracks and we were soon pushing our way through the scrub with us ducking out of the way of the acacia bushes and their thorns. The signal got stronger and we spotted a large male leopard called Mawanzi walking on the track ahead of us. Unconcerned by our presence, we got really close to him and even the collar didn't detract from the experience. We tracked him for quite some time, until he disappeared into dense undergrowth.



steenbok; waterbuck; giraffe; gemsbok & wildebeest + kori bustard – not a bad start to the holiday!

Back in camp we had a visitation from a delightful Damara dikdik, one of the smallest antelope, only standing about 30 to 40cm tall.

We spent the rest of the day relaxing and awaited Alfonso who would tell us the pick-up time for the evening game drive – which he did; 8pm with another couple.



This gave us time to have an earlier braai dinner, a large boerewors sausage that was more than enough – in fact, enough for sandwiches tomorrow on the move.

As it got dark, out came a couple of acacia rats clambering around in the bush next to us.

Alfeus arrived at 8.10pm and we sat in the very back for the drive to the Palm Lodge main complex, some way away. We spotted a bit of wildlife on the way, including a common duiker, but as our trip didn't start until we had the other two, Alfeus ignored it all! We had to wait for the other two to get ready after their

dinner and it was 8.30pm before we set out. We spotted plenty of game with lots of black-backed jackal around, more giraffe, gemsbok, springbok and waterbuck but what I was really after was lazing around its den – a fully grown young brown hyaena. I have waited years to see one: I've seen plenty of tracks in Namibia and Botswana and, also in Botswana, a dead one on the road. (we stopped to inspect it but as we did a car pulled up; two locals got out, opened the boot, one took the front legs and the other the back legs, into the boot and off they went!). But here it was, alive and in front of me – I was happy. In fact, we saw another one, an adult a bit later on. Like the leopards, the adult was collared; all part of the research being undertaken. Spring hares, scrub hare and a lovely Cape porcupine completed the experience – porcupine is another animal I've only seen a few times before.

We dropped off the other two, who didn't have much to say for themselves and I don't know what nationality they were, and we were back in our camp by 10.30pm. For me, again well worth the N\$4800 (£75 each) even though when I came to pay the bill, they had charged us N\$200 (just over £9) for the pick-up.

DAY 5 – Sunday 9 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 374km

TO: Etosha NWR Namutoni [Namutoni Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

Altitude Namutoni: 1093m

Camp Fees: TOTAL for 10 nights in various NWR Park sites (Booked through Madbookings) N\$15,540 (£710) Pre-paid.

[Namutoni: One night 3x pax = N\$1680 (£76)]

Etosha NWR Park Entry Fee & Park Conservation Fee for 2 adults, 1 under 16 & vehicle for the 5 nights in this park = N\$4000 (£183)

Up and all packed up ready to hit the road by 9:10 with first stop, reception at Palm Lodge to pay for our activities and, fingers crossed, to get some diesel. All paid on Monzo card including for 20 litres of fuel for which they charged N\$800 (£36), double what it would be elsewhere but I could hardly tell them to poke it! A staff member had to drive the vehicle, with me, through the complex to the pump that served the park vehicles – the lady had been dragged out on her day off, being a Sunday, to dispense it, for which I apologised. Back at the Reception, Lyndsey & Lily loaded up and we set out retracing our steps back to the BI and then north up to Otjiwarongo, some 50km further up the B1. I don't think I would have made it without the extra 20 litres from Okonjima, which reinforced my, 'never pass a garage!' mantra.

I had received an email from Madbookings a few days before departure informing me that there was now no fuel available at any of the camps, no plastic bags were allowed into the park and that the main track was subject to closures and diversions whilst it was being tarred all the way, eventually, from Okaukuejo to Namutoni ... think I shall be content to think this will be my last visit.

At Otjiwarongo I filled up with 62.45 litres; the book says it has a 70 litre tank but it hadn't yet gone back down into the red. We turned right from the B1, onto the B1 east whilst the B1 carried on north – all very confusing. It was about 180km to the next large town, Tsumeb, which would be last opportunity to refuel before Etosha and the last decent shopping as the shops and restaurants in the Park had gone downhill in 2022, compared to previous trips, the last of which was Christmas and New Year 2009/2010 during our year. I had said we would get a KFC at Tsumeb, as we did in 2022, but it was gone; now only a Hungry Lion was on offer but the sign said everything on the menu was off, save one chicken choice: we decided to pass on that, especially as it was busy with Sunday lunch diners, and make ourselves a sausage sandwich further up the road. We did a quick shop in Shoprite to top up our meals and a few other items; filled up at the next door garage, taking 26.97l [183km @ 14.75 litres per 100km]

It was about 75km up the B1 before the turn onto the C38. We dined in a roadside picnic site. There was much evidence of bush fires, many of which looked deliberate and controlled, to get fresh roadside grass for the sheep and goats, although we could see plumes of smoke in the actual bush. All a bit worrying, especially as a massive wildfire burnt approximately 34% to 38% of Namibia's Etosha National Park in late September 2025, charring roughly 7,750 square kilometres inside the park.

Etosha, 'the Great White Place', is huge; at 22,270km² it is bigger than Wales, a mere 20,779km² and the salt pan covers 4,731km² - 110km at its widest point by 60km. Namutoni is an old German historic fort built in 1897.

It was about 25km further on to reach the Von Lindquist Gate, the eastern entrance to the Park. Being late afternoon, there were no queues to get in and we handed over our camp bookings, gave our details, filled in the register, received our permit and passed into Etosha.

Very soon I was pointing out very fresh elephant dung in the road, male dung [ladies stop to do their business in a pile, while boys just carry on walking,



apparently!] Within a couple of kilometres, there, standing roadside, was a large bull elephant taking it easy – what a start.

It was only about 12km to Namutoni Camp and reception. Here, we showed our booking and gate permit, filled in another register and would be allocated our campsite by the guard. I had to pay for the 5 nights Park Entry Fee & Park Conservation Fee for 2 adults, Lily being under 16 was half price, & vehicle which came to N\$4000 (£183) which was more than I was expecting from the website – I was firmly told the website was wrong and new rates had come into effect 1st April, nearly doubling the cost.

My request to the camp guard for a nice spot resulted in us being allocated plot 28, right in the corner looking out over the fence and the plains where giraffe, zebra and wildebeest were on show, and away from the overlanders and South African convoys who by now were flooding in as Park closing time approached – strictly 18:44 close at Sunset & 07:18 open Sunrise!

After hunting for a couple of bricks to stand the braai on, which I kept, it was on with the spatchcock chicken served with new potatoes and broccoli. When it was properly dark, we made our way in great anticipation, to the floodlit waterhole, only to find it empty save for a rufous-cheeked nightjar putting on an aerial display of moth catching as they were drawn in to the lights. Eventually, a lone spotted hyaena walked by without stopping – most of the waterhole is hidden from view by reedbeds. We persevered but nothing new turned up so we called it a night.

DAY 6 – Monday 10 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 201km

TO: Halali Camp, Etosha [Halali Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

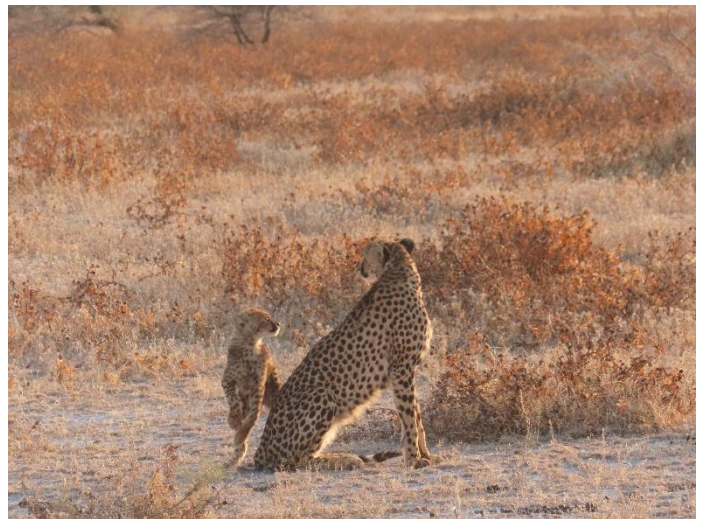
Halali Altitude: 1104m

Camp fees Halali: One night 3x pax = N\$1680 (£76)

Alarm set for 6am to make the most of the day and after breakfast we were ready to leave by gate opening time; 0718. Although we were only moving on to Halali, some 75km away, we had plenty of exploring to do. Out the gate, we turned left to take the Fisher's Pan Twee Palm loop; most others headed south or west so our route was quiet. We had only gone about 1km when we were aware of a herd of giraffe panicked into



fleeing, a sure sign of a predator and sure enough, walking parallel to the track towards us, less than 100 metres away, was a fine lioness with three small cubs in tow; we watched her out of sight. What a brilliant start. But it was to get better. Withing 400 metres, not 50 metres off the track was a mother cheetah sitting with her small cub clambering all over her. We watched in awe for some time until mum took the cub into a tangle of bushes, left him or her there, while she went off hunting.



I just couldn't believe what we had seen, all within the first hour. I've seen less than a dozen cheetah in all the years I've been coming to Africa and whilst I've seen loads of lion, Joseph and I came up blank in 2022, which I couldn't believe then!

We bumped our way round the loop and then headed north to the King Nehale Gate at the top of the park in the north-east corner. Some sections of the track were atrocious and it felt as if the camper would disintegrate. We came across elephant in the road but not too much else and Antoni waterhole was quiet, although there were good numbers of zebra, gemsbok and wildebeest out on the plains nearby. I was hoping to pick up blue crane, an isolated population well away from the main stronghold in southern South Africa, when in flew a flock of eleven and settled at a waterhole up near the gate.



We retraced our steps and Lyndsey took a turn at driving for a while, as did Lily! The awful track conditions made driving really hard work. We stopped off at Namutoni and made ourselves a left-over chicken roll in the car park as we observed three banded mongooses scampering across the irrigated lawn.

Heading now directly to Halali we ran into, not literally, loads more elephant, over 25 at one waterhole alone, with later, one large male refusing to cede passage to the vehicles, until he was ready.



We diverted off the main track to explore some of the loops and waterholes, but one had a particularly nasty looking hole that I didn't fancy tackling and risk losing an exhaust or other bits, so I reversed back until we found a section of track where I could perform a three-point turn – it was then when one realizes how big the vehicle was! Another spur took us down to Helio Hill [a former German army heliograph signalling post] but not too much was to be seen.



We booked in at Halali and were told to find our own site, which we did, No. 11; we were later registered by a roving official. On with the braai and lamb chops and at 8pm we walked up to the waterhole – still very much a health and safety risk with the unlit and extremely rough and rocky path to negotiate: two persons came a cropper while we were there! On arrival, we bagged a bench and settled down to watch as a black rhino came in to drink, taking care not to get his feet wet! Two lots of elephant came in as well as another couple of black rhinos, with two separate spotted hyaenas walking though without stopping. Several marsh owls and barn owls were flying around in the



floodlight, emulating nightjars as they took flying insects. I knew we would see black rhino, particularly at Okaukuejo waterhole, but it was a bit of a relief to have bagged them early on. We stayed for well over an hour, you never know what may appear, before heading back to camp and bed. It was still warm and although we had needed a light jumper in the mornings so far, it was a lot warmer than the 2022 visit ... when we had ice on the tent one morning!



DAY 7 – Tuesday 11 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 200km

TO: Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha [Okaukuejo Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

Okaukuejo Altitude: 1106m

Camp fees Okaukuejo: Two nights 3x pax = N\$3360 (£154)

With reveille at 6am we were packed and ready to roll by 7.10am – too early for the gate, so joined the queue with everyone eager to get going; some even tried to jump the queue. 07:18 precisely, the gates were opened and the grid was off!

Again, it wasn't far to our next stop at Okaukuejo, only about 70km, but knowing there were plenty of stopping places and side tracks, it could well take all day to get there – plus the main track was closed with unknown diversions to contend with: I also wanted to drop down to Anderson Gate, leave the park and refuel so we would be full for the long drive, getting on for 200km, out of the park through the Galton Gate in the western end of the park.

At one point near the pan, we spotted a very alert red hartebeest staring into the distance with a truck load of guests all looking at it. I, however, realised there was something else out there and sure enough, a lioness was walking through the long grass heading for a waterhole – I did alert the other lot. I and they made for the waterhole to intercept her but by the time we got there, she had changed her mind and had turned back. Day two in the park and lion number two, five if you count the cubs!

Other waterholes were very productive, but busy with park traffic condensed onto the diversion route. At one point, a pale chanting goshawk was devouring its breakfast on the road sign in the middle of the junction and all the safari trucks wanted to get the best view for their clients, leading to some chaos.

Dropping south we eventually hit tar, the main route up to Okaukuejo but just before the gate was a track to the Ombika waterhole; further north on the main road we could see a gaggle of trucks, something must be there we thought, we'll check it out on our return. There was quite a bit of game at the waterhole: zebra, kudu, springbok, giraffe, black-faced impala, warthog and loads of guinea fowl ... and a chap walking in amongst them! There were several park vehicles here and one of them pulled up beside us to let us know they were research vehicle and they were counting zebras!



We left them to it and made our way to the gate where I had to fill in the register, even though we'd be back in 30 minutes. At the Etosha Trading Post garage, eight or more kilometers outside, we queued for fuel – the only fuel available since the three park resorts have stopped supplying it; I don't know why, but this garage must be making a killing. I

eventually took on 53 litres then parked up and joined the other two in the shop where we picked up a few supplies and rolls for lunch.

Heading back to the gate, we called in at the Himba girls souvenir roadside stalls where Lyndsey and Lily bought some bracelets. I negotiated a price with a young girl with baby, for a key ring providing I could take her picture with the other two.

By the time we got back to the gate, there was a long queue, each driver in turn having to complete the register to get in. We watched as the officials made the vehicle in front remove all their shopping from the Shoprite plastic bags – the official then asked me if we had any, to



which I replied that I had read the email, unlike the people in the other car – he chuckled at that! The passenger from one of the vehicles in the queue got out and went to the empty exit gate, returning a few minutes later, got in the vehicle which promptly swung out the queue and drove through the open exit gate. Lyndsey grabbed our papers and off she went, returning with clearance to do the same thing – no doubt those left queuing were a bit peeved off, but we were back in. We called back in to the Ombika waterhole to



eat our lunch. The research vehicles had gone but there were still a few tourist trucks there. After a while, we were considering leaving when a black rhino entered stage right – wow. I saw a vehicle just about to pull off, until I attracted his attention and pointed out the rhino behind him!

As we turned back out onto the main road, we could still see a gaggle of vehicles in the distance – something was definitely still there; and so there was. Four lionesses sleeping it off in the long grass, well concealed unless they lifted their heads.

As it was still early, we decided we would carry on north up to a couple of waterholes as far as the Okondeka one: it was very barren on the way but with a bit more game nearer the dwindling waterholes. We did spot one of the things Lyndsey had wanted to see, a secretary bird, purposely striding through the grass, searching out snakes and the like. The two lone trees were still there and very much an iconic reminder of my 2009 trip. As the track was deserted, straight and reasonable, Lily had another go in the driver's seat – we survived!



We booked into Okaukuejo and were directed to the campsite where we would be allocated our campsite – No. 5. It lacked character but suited our needs for two nights. It was very busy and soon filled up with overlanders and large convoys, all squeezing into their allocated pitches.



Running around the site were plenty of ground squirrels and tree squirrels – the ground squirrels can be quite dangerous as they have a penchant to dig holes everywhere and you have to be careful where one steps. The pronunciation of the word 'squirrel' led to a long debate with Lily who insisted I was saying it wrong!

On with the braai and the pork chops and by 8.30pm we were over by the floodlit waterhole, probably one of my favourite African places. Not that many elephants but over the course of the next hour or so at least ten black rhinos were at the waterhole, all taking care not to get their feet wet! [there are no crocodiles or hippos in most of Namibia]



DAY 8 – Wednesday 12 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 0km

Okaukuejo Rest Day

Had a lazy start, most of our neighbours were up and gone. There wasn't much at the waterhole first thing so we wandered up to reception and the shop for the free wi-fi. We booked in for dinner later, 6pm was the best slot as they were busy later.

Okaukuejo is the main administration resort in the Park. It was originally a German control post becoming a fortified military outpost and then what it is today. We scaled the Tower, built in 1963, giving great views out over the flat landscape and the road construction site and a section of asphalt stretching off into the distance. Apparently, the original 'Okakwiya' means, 'the woman who has a child every year!' A troop of at least 12 banded mongoose were scratching in the irrigated lawns.



Calling in at the waterhole on the way back, we had at least 25 elephants.



Later, we wandered up to the restaurant; the menu wasn't extensive; the starters weren't available and ice cream was the only dessert option but they did have game steak which was gemsbok, so Lyndsey and I were happy – Lily went for the pork schnitzel. What should have been a nice meal was rather ruined by me having a bout of reflux that quashed my appetite – most of my steak was wrapped for tomorrow's sandwiches! Total bill with drinks; N\$1200 (£55)

On the way back, the waterhole was unusually quiet with just four rhinos and a spotted hyaena.

DAY 9 – Thursday 13 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 145km

TO: Olifantsrus Etosha NWR [Olifantsrus Campsite - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

Olifantsrus Altitude: 1110m

Camp fees Olifantsrus: One night 3x pax = N\$1530 (£70)

Before we left at 9.30am we had a last quick visit to the waterhole but it was very quiet so, instead, marveled at the huge sociable weavers nests built in many of the trees – they also quite liked the crumbs we put out for them.

The first side track we took led down to the Sprokieswoud, Ghost Tree Forest, still disappointing; just a relatively small area fenced off to protect the moringa or ghost trees, from elephants. The track was a bit on the rough side, to say the least, like most of the other tracks in Etosha! At the nearby Sprokieswoud picnic spot, where the gate has to be opened and closed to get in, we took lunch – a delicious gemsbok steak sandwich.

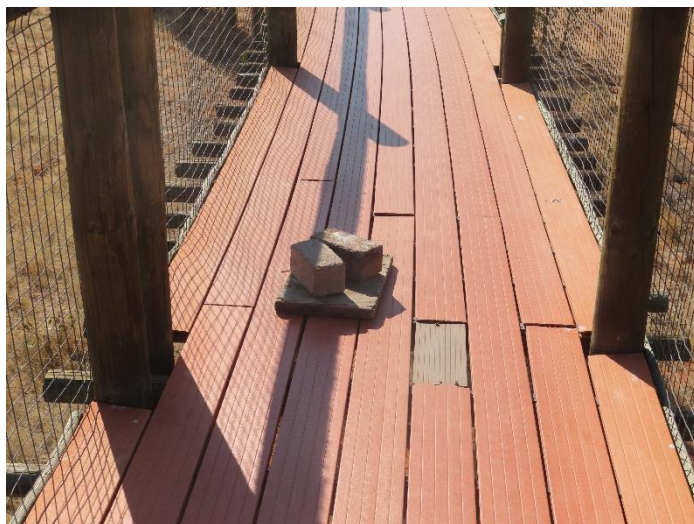
The various waterholes dotted along the route held plenty of game, including good numbers of elephants both at the water and making their way there.

Down one track, we came across a game vehicle who had just seen a cheetah disappear into the undergrowth and although we hung about, we never saw it. The other driver had radioed it in and with several other vehicles arriving, it was time to leave – with our brilliant sighting the other day, we weren't overly disappointed.

We arrived at Olifantsrus, Elephants Rest, at 3.30pm; just a campsite, we booked in and found ourselves a pitch. The first one we fancied didn't have electric so carried on looking until we found a suitable one.

Once set up, we wandered over to the waterhole which is approached by an elevated walkway. It was reassuring to see that the hole in the boards

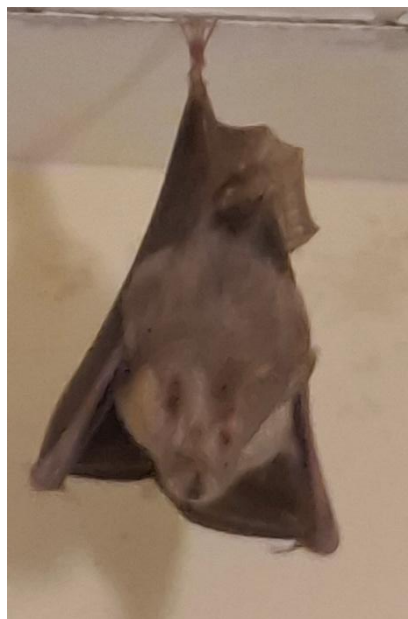
that I had reported in 2022, as it was hazardous in the dark, was still there with the temporary repair they had deigned to install, two bricks, were still in situ – oh well, no rush – TIA – This Is Africa! Lily, like Joseph previously, wasn't a fan of the walkway. Apart from a few zebra, the waterhole was quiet.



In 2022 I had very nearly come a cropper in the hide when creeping around in the dark in the lower deck to get close to a huge black rhino, when I stepped off what I thought was the floor, but was thin air, and shoulder-charged into the pillar supporting the huge windows – how I didn't injure myself or end up going through the window and ending up at the feet of the rhino, I'll never know. Now, many of the plate glass window were smashed and I wondered how many other people had done the same thing as me – clearly not part of the Park's risk assessment criteria!

Back at camp, I reported the electric wasn't working. He indicated for me to use a nearby extension cable to plug into rather than use the post socket: still no electric – well no, the generator doesn't cut in until 5.30pm! TIA.

We had a yellow mongoose scurrying around the campsite. I wandered over to the shower block, just one gents shower serving the small campsite, got undressed and stepped into the shower cubicle to be greeted



by a bat hanging there we no obvious escape route. I put the water on and opened the door; the bat flew into changing area and on opening that door the bat flew out but straight into the ladies showers! Once showered and changed, I went to get the other two to show them the bat now hanging in one of the ladies showers and managed to grab a photo ... but had to explain my presence to the family that had by now turned up. A rubbish photo on my phone, but possibly a slit-faced bat?

We returned to the hide, after dinner, armed with torches, only to find there was nothing there other than several dozen marsh owls and a few barn owls hunting insects in the floodlight.

DAY 10 – Friday 14 August 2026

Daily kilometres: 291km

TO: Palmwag Lodge & Camp [PALMWAG CAMPSITE](#)

Palmwag Altitude: 518m

Camp fees Palmwag: One night 3x pax = N\$1023 (£47) Pre-paid.

After a quick visit, on my own, to the waterhole, confirming still nothing there, we departed at 8.30am. We turned right out the camp but after a while twigged that we should have gone straight out for Galton Gate, about 65km away, but were actually on the track to the Dolomite Hills further west. Not a problem, but even looking on GPS for the camp, still cannot see how we ended up going that way, until switching to terrain view reveals another track looping round to join the main track to the Dolomites!



There were several good waterholes with plenty of game to view, including red hartebeest, and at the Duniveld one, just as we were departing, in came a Toyota with the driver gesticulating to us – three male lions and one lioness at the next water hole, off to the right in the long grass: Thanks

We hastened, as best we could on the terrible roads, as Lily really wanted to see a male as we had ‘only’ seen females so far. When we checked, the next waterhole was the one below the Dolomite Hills with very expensive lodges arranged on its slopes; 18 kilometres away. As we turned off to the waterhole, some 200 metres away, fast asleep in

front of the long grass was a large male lion. We couldn’t see any others and after a while we back tracked onto the main track to leave. As we did so we spotted three other lions now standing up, with a male and female walking towards the water at the pumping station. Returning, we got much better views of all four – think the two who drank probably had other things on their minds! The unscheduled detour from Olifantsrus had turned out to be most productive!

After 100km we arrived at the Galton Gate at the far extreme west of the Park, which, until recently, had been restricted to those staying at the up-market lodges. At the Gate I had expected to have the fridge inspected, as last time, when open milk was confiscated. Now, I just had to go into the office, with my passport and fill in the exit register! Probably just as well as we did have vacuum packed steaks!

We were soon on a good tar road, the C35, heading south to the town of Kamanjab to refuel and do a quick shop. In the garage there were a few traders with one offering hard nuts on string on which he would put names: Lily had said she wanted one for herself and friend Ava; Eva was soon changed to Ava and a price negotiated. Last time, Joe bought a pebble with his name thereon but I rejected Makalam, or something like that, as not a good stab at Malcolm! The only shop was a bit of an experience but we restocked on a few essentials, loaded up, evaded the Himba girls pleading with us to buy something, before heading out of town turning west on the C40 – not one of the better roads!

We climbed over the Grootberg Pass, reaching 1540m, before descending down towards the small town of Palmwag, if indeed it qualified as a town. Here we had to wait in a queue to be processed through the Vet fence, yet another form, taking down all details, before we were allowed to proceed into the park, being told we couldn’t bring any meat out with us in the morning. We hadn’t gone far before we turned off towards the Palmwag Lodge.

Followed signs to the main lodge reception but was redirected to the campsite reception where we were booked in, filled in the register and received three sets of keys – no, three persons not three pitches. No. 2 was finally allocated, with its own ablution block.



We took note of the signs warning that the wild elephant named Jimbo considered this place to be his and freely wandered through and to avoid him. I can vouch for that as in 2010 we had a really up-close and personal encounter with one right next to our pitch.

Still 22°C at 9pm, it was a lot warmer than 2020 when it had got down to 1.6°C in the morning: now we didn't need a jumper first thing!



It was interesting to see that there was an incredible new moon rising in front of us, just as it had done in 2020 – still confusingly it was at the wrong angle! Here the crescent lay like a saucer rather than the familiar northern hemisphere upright position ... never noticed that until the last visit. Another phenomena later on when it was a half-moon was it started bright at the top half but during the evening, the shadow rotated to end up at the top – again, never knew that: all to do with standing upside down compared to the northern hemisphere – lots on Goggle.

We had planned to dine in the restaurant but the thought of having three huge T-bone steaks, purchased at Anderson's Gate, confiscated in the morning changed our minds and we dined in.

The only creature of note seen was a large armoured ground cricket, identified by Google Lens – it has a remarkable defence strategy.



DAY 11 – Saturday 15 August 2026

TO: Cape Cross <https://www.capecross.org/>

Daily kilometres: 333km

Cape Cross Altitude: sea level

Camp fees Cape Cross Lodge: One night 3x pax = N\$720 (£33) Pre-paid.

Up early as we had a long journey ahead of us across to the Skeleton Coast and Cape Cross. A large praying mantis was on the bench seats – probably an African Mantis?



With the left-over steak safely wrapped and stashed we left at 8.10am. At the Vet gate a police officer entered the camper and searched our fridge; finding nothing for his breakfast, he reluctantly let us proceed, intact.

At the nearby ‘town’, well a few shacks, of Palmwag we headed south on the C43 for about 40km before turning west again on to the C39 to the wild Atlantic Skeleton Coast. It was a barren and desolate road with little life to be seen, save for two dogs, a few people and a few cars.

After quite some time we arrived at a gaggle of buildings which was the Springbokwasser Gate Torro Bay Terrance Bay entrance into the Skeleton Coast National Park. Having established we were heading for Cape Cross, we were issued with a permit to be handed in at the Ugabmund Gate further down the coast – at least it was free but had to be out by 7pm!



At one stretch there were loads of welwitschia plants growing roadside; they are endemic to the Namib Desert. Whilst many look dead, they are very much alive and some can be 2,000 years or more old, making them one of the oldest living plants on earth. Lily wasn't too impressed by them.

There no mammals, save a small herd of springbok and very few birds, just a couple of Ruppel's bustards and that was it until we got to the coast.

Last time there had been dense fog [the fog that sustains much of the life in the dry desert] but now it was clear and we could see the Atlantic in the distance. Interestingly, the temperature plummeted from 32°C down to 19°C in a matter of miles.

Hitting the coast, we turned south on the C34; the road was a bit like the curate's egg, good in parts but terrible in others. First point of interest that deserved a stop was the Toscanini diamond mine, long since abandoned. Here we wandered to the shoreline, decided there wasn't too much to see save a few bones of seals and small whale or dolphin and continued on our way. The arrival of three South African vehicles who drove up the slope of the old mine somewhat shattered the peace.



We also stopped off at a couple of indicated wrecks, the coast being famous for its ship wrecks, but they weren't too impressive. Next stop was at a rusting wreck of an on-shore oil rig which the elements had sculptured into amazing shapes. Desert Diamonds Ltd started mining diamonds at Toscanini in 1963 but by 1969 they had run out, so the company switched to oil exploration but none was found. The company went into liquidation in 1975 and the rig was left to the wildlife.



Hyaena tracks were evident, but no hyaenas!

At the Ugab (Ugabmund) Gate, we had to hand in our permit and in fill in the exit register, then enter the Dorob National Park. The whole stretch of coastline is extremely popular with fisherman, many from South Africa, with dedicated beach areas signed for that purpose. Our favourite was St Nowhere!

We decided we'd do the Seal Reserve in the morning so went straight to Cape Cross Lodge to book in and set up. A very large flying grasshopper didn't endear itself to Lily as it flew around her!

We had to plug in the kettle directly into the pitch plug as it tripped the circuit when used in the camper.

The Haub River, one of several dry rivers that occasionally flow after good rains, spills out into a small estuary which held a few greater flamingos and several pied avocets.

The South West Seal fishing boat, wrecked in 1976, had a little more exposed parts to view!

Another wreck and another lengthy track to it, but called it a day when it got too sandy – no 4x4 drive this time if we got stuck (we won't mention 2022).



DAY 12 – Sunday 16 August 2026

TO Alte Brücke Swakopmund [Home](#) | [Alte Brücke](#)

Daily kilometres: 140km

Swakopmund Altitude: sea level

Camp fees Alte Brücke Swakop River Resort: One night 3x pax = N\$735 (£34) Pre-paid.

Up fairly early when I noticed that part of the front bumper driving light surround was missing and the bumper was loose thanks to the top two brackets that were broken. Although the next stretch would be reasonably smooth with tar after Hentes Bay, I was still very concerned that it may completely fall off and go under the wheels. I had thought of a way of repairing/bodging the front bumper; this involved using my washing line, parachute cord, to sling a couple of loops around the broken brackets and cross fingers.

A little way further down was the track to the entrance gate of the Cape Cross Nature Reserve where we stopped, filled in the register and paid the Park entrance fee for the three of us; N\$800 (£37) and drove a few more kilometres to the reserve. Here, thousands of adult, mostly females, and young Cape fur seals, the largest colony, were lounging around with thousands more out in the sea. The noise was deafening and the smell, well, an acquired aroma! There were seals as far as the eye could see and at the height of the breeding season a little later, numbers would top over 200,000. Three shy albatrosses flew close by as well.



Lyndsey & Lily posed for photos at the actual Cape Cross – a replica of the one Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão erected there in 1486, until it was removed in 1893 by a German naval officer and taken to Germany.

We diverted across to Hentes Bay for fuel and took on 69.88 litres (so much for the 70 litre tank!) and sought out a shop, but the one we found was rubbish. The Shoprite store was much better and we restocked on a few items including wood and charcoal (responsibly sourced).

Next stop was at an obvious wreck, close to the road, very popular with the increasing tourists. In 2008, the Zelia, a 400 tonne trawler, was under tow when the line



snapped and she ran aground. She was left to the fate of the seas.

It wasn't too much further down to Swakopmund and the Alte Brücke Swakop River Resort campsite. Here we booked in, completed the register and were handed the keys to our own ablution block on pitch No. 21 ... only to find someone with their caravan already set up there. I showed them my keys but they admitted they didn't have any and were told to find a site and then get their keys – which they hadn't. We had pulled into No. 20 which was fine and the lady drove us both back to reception where I formally swapped No. 21 for 20.

One of my bumper loops had snapped so it was replaced and both modified (they would remain intact for the rest of the trip).



We fancied dining there a little later so enquired about a table – 5.30 or 9.30pm were the only options, so we went for the earlier slot, which was only about 45 minutes away and not worth returning to the campsite, so we explored the streets running off the seafront. Lyndsey & Lily entered into negotiations for more trinkets with some Himba ladies.

Back at the restaurant we were led to our table, and yes, it was extremely busy. I went for the snails, catch of the day and lemon delice; Lyndsey, scallops, steak and pannacotta; Lily, milkshake in lieu of a starter, burger and tugamisu (tiramisu) and with a bottle of wine, it came to N\$2400 (£109) but was very tasty. From our table, we watched the sun set out to sea, although the final act was obscured by cloud!

We were back at camp by 7pm for a shower in our very nice personal block. We didn't bother with a fire and weren't too late in bed.

Being a Sunday, the camp restaurant was closed but there were plenty nearby and the old German town of Swakopmund with its colonial buildings, deserved a look around. Later in the afternoon we walked along the seafront out onto the Mole Pier; we had to dodge the incoming waves as they splashed up through the walkway boards – Lily wasn't too taken with the experience. The Tug Restaurant sits at the beginning of the pier on nearly dry land and looked busy.



DAY 13 – Monday 17 August 2026

TO Lagoon Chalets Walvis Bay [Home - Lagoon Chalets & Camping](#)

Daily kilometres: 71km

Walvis Bay Altitude: sea level

Camp fees Lagoon Chalets Walvis Bay: One night 3x pax = N\$900 (£42) Paid on arrival but booked October 2025.

Away by 8.30am although it was quite foggy so not too much to see and I didn't know if I was on the old road or the new one they were constructing in 2022. It was only a short hop south to Walvis Bay, the only Namibian port, and we were there by 9.30am, too early by hours to check in to the Lagoon Chalets. We drove slowly along the sea front bay road, stopping to admire the thousands of greater flamingos. I wanted to show them the salt works and eventually we turned to carry on up round the bay. By now the fog had lifted revealing thousands of different waders, I won't bore you by listing them, but notably there were several hundred lesser flamingos huddled together and two distant great white pelicans – we would see two more later, really close.

It was quite some way to the end of the track, passing piles of salt ready to be processed, and there were quite a few 4x4 vehicles racing along, including tour ones, all heading for the end where it goes into a seriously sandy dune section down to Sandwich Bay, for which you need a permit. At the end, just as I was turning, someone helpfully cautioned me not to tackle the sand – thanks!



We arrived at the campsite just after 12.15pm, filled in the register, paid the N\$900 (£42) and went off to choose a site – No.1 looked as good as any and away from some currently unoccupied overlander tents.

We treated ourselves to egg sandwiches for luncheon, well except Lily.

DAY 14 – Tuesday 18 August 2026 (what would have been my 53th wedding anniversary)

TO NWR Sesriem Campsite Sossusvlei [Sesriem Campsite - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

Daily kilometres: 324 km

Sesriem Altitude: 785m

Camp fees: NWR Sesriem Campsite Sossusvlei three nights 3x pax = N\$4020 (£186) Pre-paid.

Park Fees = N\$2400 (£110)

A long drive ahead of us today, down into the dunes at Sossusvlei; some of the highest in the world. We were away by 8.30am routing to the nearest fuel in Walvis Bay on google maps ... but came across another way before so filled there, knowing it would be a long way to the next opportunity.

The tar out of Walvis Bay for our next leg didn't last long as the C14 headed out south east across the arid plains and we could see why this route wasn't used to get to Windhoek, even though on the map it was the most direct.

The 'road' down to Solitaire was atrocious, probably the worst yet, and that was saying something. The first section of probably 20 or 20 kilometres was being worked on but the parallel detour was even worse than the road had been. At the end of the roadworks I naively thought the road may improve ... dream on; it just got worse and worse. Other traffic was thundering pass to keep on top of the corrugations but my poor little camper felt decidedly uncomfortable and at any speed the back end was trying to step out leading to some anxious moments – reducing the speed only meant we now chattered along in the bumps, rather than skimming over the surface: the prospect of another 250 kilometres like this was daunting, to say the least, and I half expected to be returning the camper back to the hire company in boxes.

It was very long and very arduous with the only relief being we climbed up and down some impressive



passes. Just after the Gaub Pass, rising to 750m and only 60km from Solitaire thank goodness, we reached the sign for the Tropic of Capricorn and had to stop for the obligatory photo shoot.

It was busy with everyone grabbing their own shots in front of the Tropic of Capricorn sign, until we realised the sign the other side had nobody there – same sign, just facing the other way. There was a new photographic feature that some kind soul offered to take with my camera.

[the significance of the two Tropics, Capricorn & Cancer is they delineate the maximum north and south points where the sun reaches directly overhead

as the earth tilts. It does vary by a few metres each year but no point in keep shifting the sign! [We crossed over it again coming back up the B1 later on]



We eventually arrived at a one-horse “town” that was Solitaire - campsite, gas station and shop only but with lots of old American cars dotted around and packed with tourists heading to or from Sossusvlei. We looked in the shop and treated ourselves to ice creams and ate our sandwiches in the van before topping up with diesel – only 30.10 litres but never pass a garage! [12.7 litres per 100km; 22 mpg UK]



We still had 80 odd kilometres to go down to Sesriem campsite and the road wasn't much better than it had been – all many times worse than I remember from previous visits. But we made it, intact, and handed over our camping papers for checking at the first gate and were directed to the reception to book in, with the obligatory register to fill in and were allocated campsite 18. They confirmed that I could exit the campsite early before the gates officially opened as I had somewhere to be in the morning! However, before entering the campsite, I had to drive down to the Park gate proper to get our Park Permits – for the three days – N\$2400 (£110).



Back at the campsite, get checked in by the guard and find our site – the large low acacia tree meant we couldn't get into the pitch, so just parked up outside.

It was really warm by now; 34°C so the shade was welcomed. However, the cold showers weren't – never did get a hot one in the three days there. I did report it but just got an 'oh dear' – TIA.

After our braai it was early to bed with the alarm set for 4.30am – don't tell Lily!

DAY 15 – Wednesday 19 August 2026

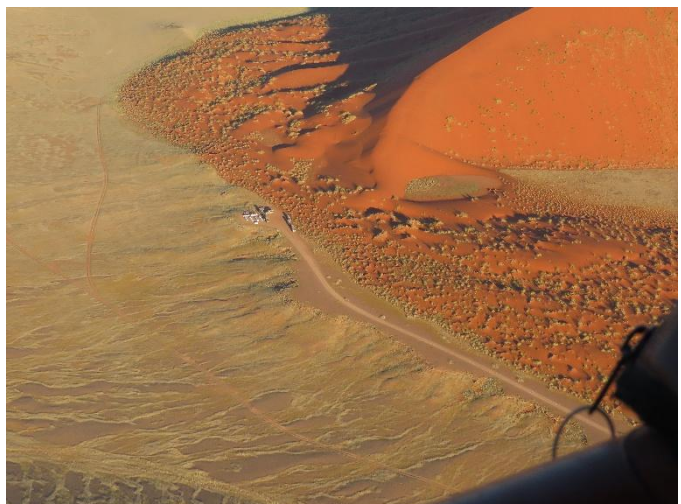
To Namib Balloon Safaris [Namib Sky - Balloon Safaris in Namibia](#) & Sossusvlei

Daily kilometres: 169 km

Up with the 4.30am alarm. Namib Sky Balloon Safaris had WhatsApped a couple of days before to advise the meeting time (depends on sunrise) – 5.50am, but not knowing what the state of the roads were, in the dark, I allowed plenty of time to get out the gate and drive the 22km down the C27. We left at 5.05am, just in case! Out the gate no problem, showing permit, then turned south on the C27 which was a bit rough in places and slow going but still got there at 5.30am ... and we weren't the first by a long chalk. Checked in with Paul, who would be our pilot and waited for the briefing and allocation of vehicles out to the launch site. One group, we think, was probably going off flying, while the remaining 32 would be in the two balloons that had gone on ahead.

We drove for about 30 minutes across the grass plains into the NWR Reserve to a spot where the balloons were being readied and it was fascinating to watch the procedure that took getting on for half an hour. Meanwhile, the sun was rising over the mountains.

With the balloon fully inflated our group were arranged into groups of four and allocated a corner section of the basket. I was with three others but was next to Lyndsey and Lily in the adjacent section. Paul was a bit of a character. The other balloon ascended before us but we were soon on the up trying to find the currents that vary with altitude and would take us in the right direction to our champagne breakfast – I think they both knew what they were doing. Off we floated in a south-westerly direction up to 2200ft (670m) and it was rather surreal and tranquil; until he gave a burst of flame. I spotted a few springbok, a jackal and three lappet-faced vultures, the largest African vulture and as we passed over the road down to the dunes, a couple of gemsbok with a youngster in a dry river bed, not that far from the tables set up for us.



We seemed to be on course for a landing quite close to the breakfast area but Paul dropped down and skimmed over the plains until we finally landed, probably a kilometre or more further on. Think it was a controlled landing? The helpers having been mobilized, between them, and with judicious blasts of flame to keep the basket bobbing, we were manoeuvred closer to the recovery vehicle and trailer – it looked like hard work! Having received landing instructions, the basket was tipped on its side and we exited in turn.



So, that was ‘balloon ride’ crossed off my bucket list and what more iconic place to do than in the Namib Dessert. What an experience which I think the other two enjoyed, hope so.



Lyndsey had dubbed the two pilots as ‘Tom Cruise’ on the left with ‘Crocodile Dundee’ on the right (our Paul)

It was then time for the champagne breakfast and quite some spread it was and having established we had a honeymoon couple amongst us, Paul theatrically took the top off a bottle with a sharpened machete.

Following breakfast, we loaded back on the vehicles and drove all the way back to base. Here, I settled the bill – N\$32,160 ... £1,472. I knew it was going to be expensive but I’ll probably never

do it again and what wonderful memories for the three of us – and it would double up as Lyndsey’s birthday present in a couple of days. We each got a Flight Certificate.

Lyndsey & Lily visited the nearby Little Bugs school, all part of the Namib Balloon Community Trust that provides free schooling, uniforms, meals and daily transport from as far away as 100km, along with other community projects - nice to see some of my money going back to the locals.

It was 11am by the time we left and we decided we would re-enter the Park and head down to Deadvlei now rather than in the morning and get caught up in the mad rush that we had witnessed from our balloon high above them. The inner gate into the park opens one hour before sunrise, i.e. 6.21am, for those camping inside the park; those beyond the outer gate wouldn’t get in until an hour later. It is 60km on tar down to the dunes proper with another last 5km restricted to high clearance 4x4 due to the deep sand. So, one hour to do 60 kilometres; the road has a 60kph speed limit, the sun rises one hour after the gate opens ... and you still on arrival have to climb the very steep 350m high Big Daddy dune to catch the first rays of the rising sun. The maths just doesn’t work out, which is why nobody takes any notice of the speed limit!

We slowly made our way into the park, passing the spot up in the dunes where we had breakfast earlier. There wasn’t much life around, apart from large flocks of suicidal sparrow-larks, small birds, with several casualties littering the road – no doubt to be a welcome snack later for a hungry jackal, brown hyaena or

one of the overhead vultures. I was trying to point out what is [was] probably the most famous and photographed dune in the world, Dune 45 but it looked different with its crescent-waved dune not what it used to be, no doubt thanks to the wind. The dunes, rather lacking in imagination, are numbered by kilometres from the gate!

We arrived at the parking area and paid N\$600 for our shuttle ticket to take us down the remaining sandy section; there was a vehicle ready to go. At the drop-off point it was another kilometre or so to Deadvlei along a sandy and in places steep, track. It was really hot, so armed with hats, umbrella and plenty of water, off we went. The sand was red hot – leaving me wishing I hadn't worn sandals. Eventually, we crested the last dune, and there before us was the iconic and famous vista that is Deadvlei (Dead Marsh) with its preserved 900 year old trees. There were still a few people at the top of Big Daddy but most of the hardy early birds would by now have descended, many by running, sliding or rolling down the almost vertical drop off the 350m dune!



Back on the return shuttle, we made our way back to the camper for the return back to camp, stopping off at both Dune 45 and 40; neither Lyndsey or Lily were up for the challenge of climbing them.

We were back in camp by 3.50pm and relaxed and reflected upon what had been for me a most splendid day – I do hope the other two thought likewise.



There was no need to book a table at the restaurant so we wandered over at 7pm. The menu wasn't extensive; starters, just soup but not available, two choices for main, and only ice cream. Lyndsey and I went for the game steak, gemsbok, and Lily went for the chicken. It wasn't bad and with drinks, only N\$760, £35. Back at camp on with a fire to sit around. Last night I had tripped over a length of black pipe sticking out the concrete braai structure: I did it again, this time, ripping the nail on one of my little toes.

DAY 16 – Thursday 20 August 2026

Sesriem Campsite

Rest Day

Daily kilometres:0 km

Lily made the most of her lie in. Sitting around relaxing and reading, our fireman turned up and, with just a piece of cardboard, removed all trace of ash from the fire. I told him the offending pipe needed cutting off as I had injured myself on it, but from the blank look, it was clear this was lost on him - TIA. I then remembered I had a saw on my multi-tool: five minutes later, the health and safety risk had been rectified.

I had been saying about the large gemsbok that had walked through the camp last time, when, later in the afternoon, incredibly, we looked up and there it was, really close; by the time I had grabbed my camera, it had moved off. Clearly, he owned the place. I do hope we hadn't eaten a close relative of his last night!



A large overland truck, with noisy Italians, pitched up fairly close to us although, the pitches are well spaced, but once the numerous tents were up, off they went in the truck, leaving the cook to prepare the evening meal on a huge fire with huge cooking pots. They returned well after dark and were quite animated, and the loud conversations were still going on as we turned in – they soon quietened down.

DAY 17 – Friday 21 August 2026 Happy birthday Lyndsey & granddaughter Kirsty; Seven years RIP Judi

TO NWR Hardap Dam Resort [Hardap Resort - Namibia Wildlife Resorts](#)

Daily kilometres: 297km

Hardap Altitude: 1175m

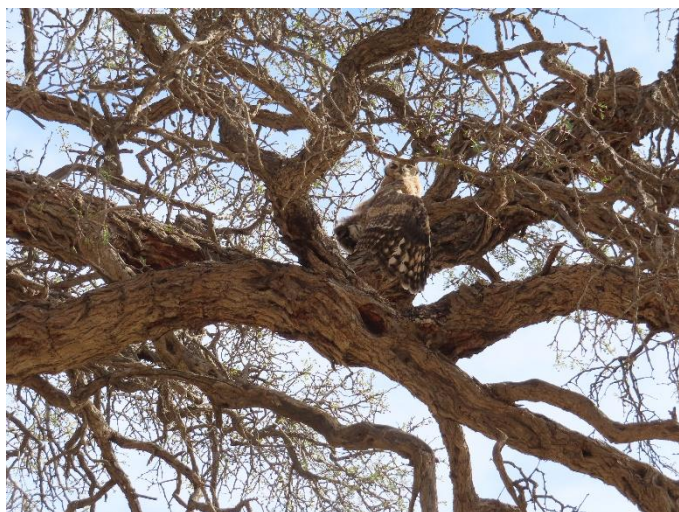
Camp fees: NWR Hardap Dam two nights 3x pax = N\$1200 (£50) Pre-paid.

Park Fees = N\$1220 (£51)

A reasonably long journey today to our next and penultimate camp site at the NWR Hardap Dam Resort – I didn't know what to expect. We were away by 8.15am but rather than backtrack up to Solitaire for fuel on the bumpy road, heading in the wrong direction north, we decided to head south on the C27 and refuelled at the nearby garage that looked very new – there also seemed to be a new campsite with lodges as well.

The C27 was the road we took down for the balloon so knew what to expect for the first bit, but rather hoped it wouldn't get any worse, better hopefully, thereafter! The GPS was saying 25km on this road before turning onto the D845 and across to the C19 and south. The D845 was a much better gravel road than we had been on for quite some time, thank goodness, but the C19 was a reality check as we made slow progress slipping and sliding on the loose surface, but at least there was little other traffic around.

We stopped for coffee in a picnic spot and Lyndsey pointed out what she thought was a bird of prey, obscured in a nearby bush. With a bit of manoeuvring, I was able to see enough of it as being a spotted eagle-owl – a good sighting. I then noticed another in the same bush. Looking up from our seats, there above us were two nearly fully grown owl chicks giving us inquisitive looks.



Along the way we had spotted a couple of giraffes, jackal, springbok & ground squirrels but not much else. Although there were fences most of the way both sides, save for the old goat herd, there was no evidence of agriculture.

After quite some way, we turned left onto the C14 and a further 20km on we came to quite a large town. At Maltahohe we found a garage and a nearby shop, a pretty rubbish shop, so went off to

find a bigger one, which we did in a shopping centre.

In Maltahohe we turned right back onto the C19 east onto a lovely tarred road that we didn't think would last; but it did, for the next 100km' until we turned off it, north, for Hardap Dam, some 30km away ... on gravel!

Being near the dam allowed for irrigation systems to sustain various lush crops all along the route, not seen elsewhere in Namibia. We eventually arrived at 2.30pm at the Park gate where we showed our booking, signed the register and paid the N\$1200 park fees. We were the only visitors of the day and only one or two were in yesterday. It was another 4km to the Resort reception where we checked in, filled in another register and were given the keys to the ablution block. It was well over a kilometre further on to the uninspiring looking campsite. We selected our site and went to reverse in but missed a small wooden post in my mirrors; fortunately, it had come easily out of the sand and no damage was done.

Later, we noticed that the engine underbelly plate was hanging down and I hatched a plan to tie it back up which involved cutting a length of thin stick, attaching a bit of washing line and feeding it through the engine bay. I then spread my bed sheet, changed a couple of days ago, to lie on under the vehicle to effect repairs. I could see the plastic plate was now only held on by one of the four attachment points and by use of the small vehicle tool kit, found a suitable spanner to remove the last bolt. Job done. I did put it in the

wheelie bin but the bin emptier decided it was too good to sling and he put it to one side – I took the hint and retrieved it. I rinsed out the sheet in the laundry block and strung out the washing line in a tree.

One other vehicle turned up and selected a spot as far from us as was possible. Judging by the time they took to erect the roof tent, I would hazard a guess that they had just picked up their hire vehicle and this was their first night.



My eSim had its best signal of the trip and the other two hot-spotted off it but even so, Lyndsey & Lily walked back up to reception for the Resort wi-fi. On with the fire for what would be our last braai, having decided we would eat in the restaurant tomorrow; boerewors sausage!

DAY 18 – Saturday 22 August 2026

Rest Day

Daily kilometres: 28km

Our fellow campers eventually packed up and departed, leaving us on our own again. We walked back up to reception for the wi-fi, and to enquire about park routes and the restaurant. We decided we would dine there tonight, but we would drive. There were lots of rock hyraxes, dassies, around, some trying to be tree hyraxes – a first for the trip. Out in the lake on a large island, were hundreds of great white pelicans.



there for the weekend. There was a bit of wildfowl around and springbok, two gemsbok & a troop of chacma baboons. What looked to be the best track off to the north of the dam was accessible by a track that turned out to be inaccessible for us, so we called it a day and headed back to camp. We were there by 1.15pm and utilised the rest of the afternoon on making a start with packing our bags. We had a visit from a yellow mongoose.

We had booked a table for 7pm, but being lazy, we drove there: the restaurant was empty as we were shown to our window table. Lyndsey went for the pork, Lily chicken and me the lamb, which was as tough as old boots, unfortunately.



The lady on reception said we could drive on the tracks on the map we received at the gate; when we said we didn't get one, she gave us another – should have turned the permit over! She said the tracks were good! The main track wasn't too bad but some of the side tracks down to the lakeside were a bit challenging.

On a couple of occasions, I wasn't going to risk the rough sections; okay in a land rover but perhaps not an Iveco camper. This involved reversing back some way to find an area to perform a three-point turn without going over the edge. Most tracks and coves had a gaggle of fishermen looking as if they were

Back at camp, it was on with a fire and we were entertained by a mouse who would pluck up courage, dash out and grab some of the bread Lyndsey had put out earlier for the birds.

Lyndsey called us over to the shower block and pointed out a couple of geckos that promptly disappeared out the window as I lifted my camera: I did snap one in the gents block though – think it was probably a flat-tail gecko?

DAY 19 – Sunday 23 August 2026

TO: Trans Kalahari Inn <https://www.transkalahari-inn.com/> as Day 2

Daily kilometres: 283 km

Altitude: 1656m

A troop of baboons were nearby so we were alert to a possible raiding party, but they kept their distance – probably accounts for most of the wheelie bins being knocked over. We were away by 8.30am, dropping off the ablution block keys at reception and on to the exit gate. Here, the lady asked us if we had left a mobile phone in the ablution block in the campsite as the cleaner could hear a phone ringing inside the locked block. A double check confirmed we had all ours, but even so, she asked us to wait until it was checked out. Don't know what it was but we were cleared for take-off – nice that they had taken the trouble to check it out though.

We were soon back on the tar which this time stretched all the way to the B1 and realised we had probably suffered the last of any abysmal gravel roads and were now confident we could get the camper back in one piece.

The road started quiet but as the morning wore on the lorries increased as did the number of South African convoys coming up, no doubt, from the Noordoewer border crossing 500km further south on the B1. Overtaking on the straight, flat and quiet roads is a simple process and little held up the convoys, I guess all heading for Etosha, 650km further north – the South Africans are great ones for long distance travel in one hit.

Conscious that I had to return the vehicle with a half tank, I reckoned 20 litres at the next garage would do the trick so stopped in Kalkrand. The attendant made a hash of refueling and at just over 10 litres told him that would do. I got him to clean the windows all round as part of returning the camper in a clean state! We were descended upon by a load of kids all wanting something but they were very entertaining as they insisted on trying to guess my nationality – they came up with most countries in the world, but not the UK. The one shop nearby didn't look too inspiring so we departed.

The next town of Rehoboth was bigger with a shopping centre and a Shoprite where some pies and tarts for lunch plus some drinks were purchased. We pulled in to a picnic spot to eat them but all decided they were disappointing, to say the least, and most went to waste – we could have done with some hungry children around!

The fuel gauge was looking like it would be reading about right so didn't bother with a final squirt but rather made our way to the Trans Kalahari Inn campsite, arriving 1.30pm. Bobo Campers were closed so straight to reception to check in, fill in the register for the last time, hopefully and told to choose a pitch other than 2 or 3. Number 1 was next to the ablution block and handy for our attempts at cleaning out the vehicle ready for the return.



We were dining in the restaurant tonight and would have breakfast and lunch there tomorrow so, we bagged up any useful leftover items and food to leave for Bobo to distribute and left the remaining firewood plus firelighters and gas lighter, on the top of the fire pit. We made quite a good job of making it look reasonably tidy inside, showing that we had at least made a bit of an effort – the dirty outside was ignored as we had no way of cleaning it and we couldn't reasonably be expected to do so, surely?

A faults list was compiled for Bobo's attention:

Side light and brake pad warning light on from day 1

Front driving light and surround gone

Bumper tied on

Underbelly tray removed

Bed cushions, wrong ones

Table leg unusable as jammed in (thanks to bumps) and extremely difficult to remove at night so not used

Cutlery drawer wouldn't open fully

Wardrobe door dropped on hinges

Over cab bedroom curtain missing

With cleaning done and bags all but packed for the morning return, having established we could leave in the reception office, we got ourselves ready for the last supper. I had bigged up the menu choice that Joe and I had had last time – the Namibian grill platter; a selection of three 100g portions of the six listed exotic meats: kudu; springbok; eland; zebra; hartebeest; gemsbok. Lily went for the pork ribs. Lyndsey and I went three different ones and then shared halves. They came with flags and a chart but it was difficult to keep up with what was what, but all very tasty indeed.



It was then back to the camper for our last sleep-over.

DAY 20 – Monday 24 August 2026
To: Bobo Compound & later WDH Airport
Odometer RETURN Reading; 120578km
Trip Total kilometres: 3117km [1937 miles]
WDH Airlink/Emirates EK4162 [4Z127] 18:20

We finally packed the last items into our bags and put them out for carrying over to reception to store. We had kept out our travel clothes as we would be hanging around until our 3pm shuttle pick up; we also held back towels for later showers.

Once we had our breakfast we all drove the 200 metres up to Bobo ... with fingers crossed. 'Don't worry about the bits falling off, it happens all the time on our roads' was music to my ears. He agreed the roads were atrocious and were getting much worse. I could see in the workshop several other campers with their bumpers off, so what was I worried about?

He checked over the items, counting the cutlery etc. – all present and correct ... except where was the torch? That hadn't worked from day one and had used our own - Lyndsey confessed she had probably packed it in her case: for N\$60 it wasn't worth looking for it!

He was happy with the return fuel level so that all that remained was to pay for the toilet chemicals used and one gas bottle. He signed off the vehicle and handed me the confirmation sheet that was very gratefully received – thank goodness I had paid for full cover as I suspect it may otherwise have been a different outcome!

We wandered back to the reception and sat around the pool in the shade; it looked inviting but a couple of hardy toe-dippers confirmed it was very cold. A slow lunch was followed by showers and clothes change in readiness for 3pm collection. The towels were returned to Bobo and bags taken out to the table and chairs outside the Trans Kalahari Inn. Bang on 3pm the chap from Bobo turned up – he was our shuttle.

We had already checked in on-line for all three legs and knew what desk to check in and whilst there was a large queue nearby, our desk was free and we were soon done and heading for immigration and security and into departures.

There were several small shops and a duty free to distract us and to use up the last of our Namibian dollars, but not much else to while away the time before our 18:20 Airlink/Emirates EK4162 [4Z127] flight to JNB. The small airport was busy so we stayed put on our seats. Once boarded on the Embraer E170LR, we took off 5 minutes ahead of schedule and landed at 19:53, 17 minutes early. However, there was a bit of a mix up at JNB with the captain announcing where he was parked, the extending gangway wouldn't reach and we would have to wait for a set of steps to arrive. We were held on board for ages until we finally disembarked, walked across the apron, up a flight of stairs and onto the gangway. We had the reverse of what we did on arrival with passport and security checks before we were into Terminal A International Departures proper.

Most of the rand was spent on duty free tobacco for son and I bought a couple of Cape Union shirts and Lyndsey spent hers and Lily bought some books.

It was soon time to head for our gate for the Emirates Boeing 777-31 EK766 with a scheduled 22:20 take-off and although we boarded in good time, it was actually 22:49 by the time we left for our 7 hours 28 minutes flight with an arrival time of 08:20 local [2 hours ahead of South Africa] and landed virtually on time. We now had a considerable time to wait before our 16:40 Emirates EK69 Airbus A350 to LGW that should take 8 hours 17 minutes.

Coffees cost the equivalent of £20 and whiled away some time. but after a few circuits of the lounge, we found some loungers and relaxed. Later, we treated ourselves to a United Arab Emirates' McDonalds! Lily wanted some Lego so into the Lego Shop. I didn't want anything, having got a fridge magnet on the way out!

At the Gate they were calling us through and we thought perhaps we were boarding soon, but no, that was just to go downstairs into another departure area. Lyndsey and I were directed into the lounge area by airport security but Lily was sent forward to join a queue for a full search – we complained that she was a minor and should be accompanied, but that fell on deaf ears. We hovered nearby to watch as she emptied her bags, had a full pat down and was scanned completely, including her shoes, for drugs or explosives and once that was analysed, they let her through. We didn't have too long to wait before we boarded. We departed at 16:59 and landed 21:12, slightly ahead of schedule, having put our watches back three hours.

Through immigration and out to the carousels: it took a while for the bags to appear, but finally we were heading for the bus stop. The car park bus soon turned up and we squeezed on and remembering our stop number, alighted and headed for the car. Good job the car had been in a secure compound as I had forgotten to lock it!

We were soon heading up the M23, enjoying the smooth surface, anti-clockwise M25 but with the M40 shut the GPS kept us on the M25 until the A41 exit for Aylesbury. With a hunt for an open garage, the fuel light having come on, we arrived back in Buckingham not long after midnight – and relax!

REFLECTIONS

I love Africa and enjoyed sharing it with my daughter and youngest grandchild. We had some memorable wildlife experiences, with a little culture thrown in, not to mention the balloon ride.

Namibia is a safe, friendly and relaxed country, although it has become a lot more expensive to visit.

The weather had been perfect and warmer than 2020; the roads a lot worse and I am still amazed the camper held up and wasn't returned in boxes!

We got on well and I enjoyed telling them all about Africa and I sincerely hope I have fired up Lily's desire for travelling.

With the promise Judi & I had made to take the grandchildren to Africa fulfilled, save for Molly who declined the offer, I am content.

I think they really enjoyed the experience.
I do hope so – I certainly did.

Malcolm Collis