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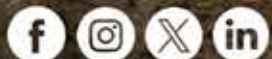
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Emma Theofelus

Honourable Emma Inamutila Theofelus

Minister of Information, Communication and Technology

Guarding Namibia's Trust in a Digital Age

Cybersecurity Awareness Month reminds us that while technology evolves, the strength of our nation still lies in vigilance, truth, and the firmness of a Namibian handshake.

Dear Readers,

World over, October is recognized as Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and for me, its message feels closer to home than ever.

It is quite a different subject, especially in our country where business has always been rooted in trust: a call to a respected relative, the reassurance of a friend, and finally, the unmistakable firmness of a Namibian handshake.

For Namibia, however, this danger is no longer distant. The rise of highly realistic AI-generated videos of our leaders delivering false messages has brought the crisis to our doorstep. These are not harmless fabrications. They carry real consequences: citizens misled into poor investments, families facing financial ruin, and personal data exposed to cybercriminals who exploit trust with ruthless efficiency.

Because of this, Namibia is implementing a National Cybersecurity Awareness Plan; to educate and protect our people, and to safeguard the very trust our nation was built on. Yet its success requires more than policy; it depends on the active participation of every sector and every citizen.

As of early 2025, nearly 1.59 million Namibians are online, with 2.6 million mobile connections in a nation of just 3 million people. It is a long way from the days when

a crackling radio or a lone farm telephone carried our voices. This transformation is remarkable, but it also places greater responsibility on us all.

The Namibia Cybersecurity Incident Response Team (NAMCIRT) plays a central role in coordinating responses to cyber threats, issuing timely warnings, and mitigating attacks. While much has already been achieved, important work lies ahead, particularly in empowering everyday users of cyberspace. After all, most incidents are not caused by technology itself, but by human choices and interactions.

The role of the individual is therefore crucial. The combined efforts of government and the private sector can only succeed if citizens remain vigilant. With the introduction of electronic signatures and the growing reliance on online services, now is the time for Namibians to strengthen their awareness — learning how to authenticate information and navigate the digital world safely.

After all, this is Namibia — our country — and we stand proud to support and do business with the unmistakable firmness of a Namibian handshake: a trust that no AI or fake news should ever be allowed to undermine.

Wishing you a wonderful October and the joy of a great read in this month's edition of Michelangelo Magazine — Born Namibian, Read Globally. 🌐





Where Skies Hold Secrets

*When landscapes speak,
they tell stories too vast to
capture in words*

Catharina de Lange

Catharina de Lange

Project Manager,

Ongava Hai//om Tourism Pty Ltd



When the call came to write the October Guestnote, I thought of all the places I've seen — and yet, nothing compares to here.

From my perspective working for 30 years in the Southern African tourism industry, across landscapes like the Waterberg Mountains and the Eastern Cape Karoo, what was missing was the landscape of my birthplace.

This may be the most difficult note I've ever tried to write. How do you capture a place so unique, so breathtaking, that words only stumble? Most mornings, I found myself lost for thought — the beauty here is almost impossible to hold in a single frame of mind. A sunrise so red it feels like the earth itself is catching fire, reminding us that new beginnings are never gentle.

I find myself north of my birthplace, near the southern border of the Etosha National Park. Proclaimed in 1907, it once stretched over 100,000 square kilometres, larger than many countries. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s, its borders were reduced, leaving the 22,000 square kilometres known today — still vast, yet only a fraction of its former glory. Around me stand ancient Mopane and Corkwood trees. In their silence, it feels as if they hold a thousand untold stories, waiting to be heard.

During the months of June and July, along the nearby gravel road — simply known as the D2779 — winter dust lies suspended in silence. With no breeze to carry it away, the

road keeps it close, as if it were a gentle companion for the long, cool night to come. A night that soon fills with the sounds of hyenas and owls.

Some secrets belong to the land itself. Here, between Elandsfontein, Nuchas, and Werda, Namibia hides one — a secret of potential, where heritage and wilderness meet in silence beneath the same sky as it has been for thousands of years.

The world feels heavier than it once did. And yet, in September — spring as we know it — this land teaches me otherwise. Beneath skies so wide they humble the heart, and among trees that have stood for generations, there remains comfort, beauty, and hope. Joy is never truly gone here; it waits patiently, like an old friend.

And there are whispers now — faint, but steady — of something stirring, something that may rise here like water from a hidden spring in a dry and barren land. It is not yet ready to declare itself, but the promise lingers in the air, as sure as the scent of rain before the first drops fall.

This land cherishes its mysteries, revealing them sunrise by sunrise. I invite you to come, to travel its gravel roads, to rest under its vast skies, to listen for the whispers, and discover what cannot be written, only experienced. For Namibia is not just a place to visit — it is a place to feel, to return to, and to carry with you long after you've left. ❖

Michelangelo



ON THE COVER:

V-5 R.O.B.: Wings of Purpose

Brought to life by N/a'an ku sê Films, styled by Namibian designer Anna-Mart, and featuring Dr. Rudie and Marlice van Vuuren alongside Athena the cheetah, with the support of the N/a'an ku sê Group and narrated by V5-ROB.

(See pages 14-18 for the full story)

www.naankuse.com



Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of Michelangelo International Wine and Spirits Awards.



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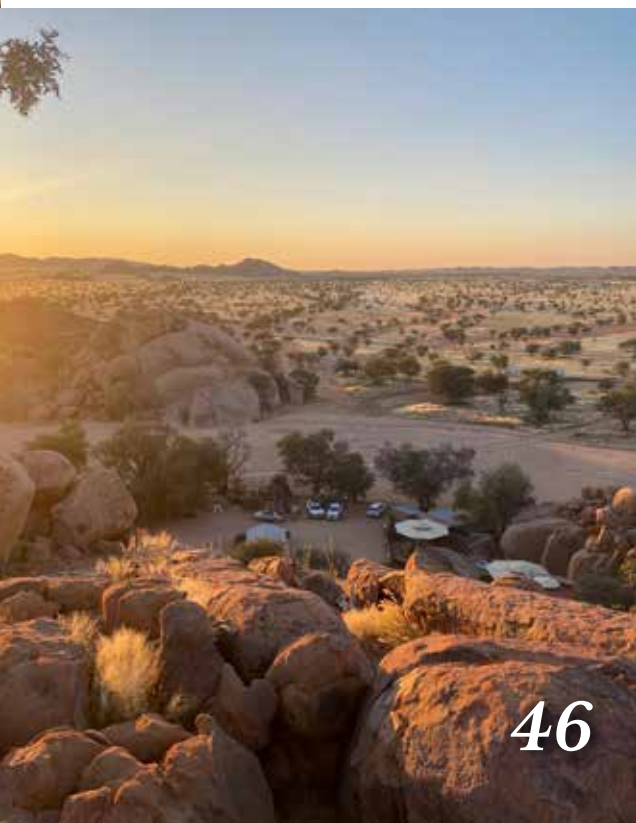
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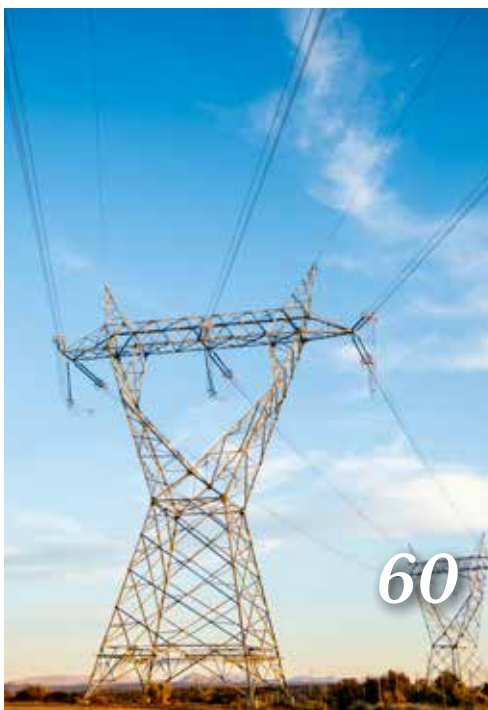
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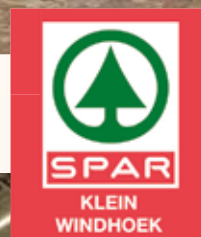


No matter which way you're heading from Windhoek this spring —north, south, east, or west—there's a **Wecke & Voigts SPAR** conveniently located to help you prepare for the journey ahead. From road-trip snacks and fresh meals to special finds that make the journey easier.

SPAR Klein Windhoek

📍 Berg Street, Camelthorn Pod, Klein Windhoek

Flying out or heading east? SPAR Klein Windhoek is an elegant choice before you leave. Browse its refined wine selection, pick up something sweet from the boutique bakery, or grab gourmet ready-to-heat meals to keep travel easy.



SPAR Hochland

📍 Kingfisher Road, Hochland Park

Heading south or west? SPAR Hochland is loved for its generous traditional meals from the HMR counter—ideal for something filling on the go. The bakery and groceries make stocking up simple, while TOPS Hochland next door has your drinks sorted.

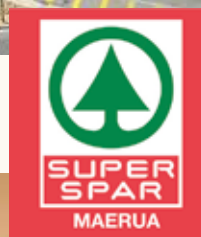
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📍 Maerua Lifestyle Centre, Centaurus Road

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📍 Grove Mall, Chasie Street, Kleine Kuppe

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V-5 R.O.B.

Wings of Purpose

*Wings that carry more than passengers by
delivering medicine, relocating lions and sustaining
communities across vast distances*

words & photographs supplied by N/a'an ku se Foundation

Michelangelo

—CONSERVATION—



Namibia is a country of endless horizons. A place where wildlife roams free, where people live far apart, and where the distance between need and help can stretch for hundreds of kilometers. For Rudie and Marlice, founders of the N/a'an ku sê Foundation, these distances were never barriers. Their mission to protect wild animals, uplift vulnerable communities, and bring hope to remote places demanded wings. And that is where I entered the story.

My journey began with my older sibling, a 1965 Cessna 182 named V-5 P.I.T. From 2006 onward, P.I.T. carried Rudie across the skies to reach the Lifeline Clinic in Epukiro. Later, when the human-wildlife conflict research project launched in 2008, P.I.T. became a lifeline for conservation. Back then, there were no GPS collars—only faint VHF signals. P.I.T. would fly low and circle endlessly above the bush, straining to catch that crucial sound. It was painstaking work, but every flight carried a mission: saving wildlife and serving people.

For years, P.I.T. proved his worth. But in 2021, on a routine takeoff from N/a'an ku sê to TimBila, his engine faltered. Water in the fuel caused failure just before rotation. Though Rudie managed to fix it, the moment was a turning

Michelangelo

—CONSERVATION—



Daily screen time averages 6h 40min per day (about 40% of a person's waking hours).



point. Rudie needed wings that were stronger, safer, and built for the future.

That's when Oom Jan and Tannie Tineke Verburg stepped in. When they learned of the dangers Rudie faced flying an aging plane, they knew it was time for something more reliable. With faith and generosity, they entrusted me—a 2006 Cessna Grand Caravan, lovingly maintained by African Profile Safaris and pilot Jan Fried—into Rudie and Marlice's care. I was not given as mere metal and wings, but as an investment in a vision, a family, and a future. Their trust ensured Rudie could return safely from every mission, and it gave two boys—Zacheo and Nicklai—the chance to grow up under wings they could trust. From playing in the dust at my wheels to gazing wide-eyed into my cockpit, they learned early that flight is not just about leaving the ground, but about carrying futures forward.

Finally, I came with strength, comfort, and purpose. My Oasis interior could hold nine passengers, but my true gift was versatility. Some call me the Swiss Army knife of the

The entire human population could fit inside the Grand Canyon.



skies. I can land where others cannot—on rough bush strips, desert plains, and gravel runways. One day, I lift travellers high above Namibia's landscapes, showing them beauty they will never forget; the next, I carry medicine to remote communities, relocate lions from conflict zones, or even fly a leopard to Windhoek for an MRI.

Since joining the mission, I have carried more than passengers and cargo. I have carried resilience, love, and hope. I've flown doctors and supplies to villages far from roads. I've relocated lions and leopards, giving them a second chance at life. I've lifted guests into Namibia's skies, their journeys helping to sustain the very projects that keep this land and its people thriving. Even my luxury fly-in safaris play their part—their revenue flows straight back into conservation and humanitarian work.

With every takeoff, I lift more than weight. I lift a legacy: Rudie's vision, Marlice's passion, Oom Jan and Tannie Tineke's faith, and the bright futures of Zacheo and Nicklai. I am part of a family, part of a mission, part of something far greater than flight itself.

I am V-5 R.O.B., and I am more than a plane. I am purpose with wings. ❖



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Rudolf Seibeb:

Closer to Clarity

Exploring abstraction, humanity, and the shifting face of reality



words and photographs by Laschandre Coetzee of The Project Room
profile photograph of Rudolf Seibeb by Willem Vrey

Rudolf Seibeb has long been recognised as one of Namibia's most distinctive painters, known for his striking use of colour, layered compositions, and deep fascination with the human face and form. This month, he will showcase his latest body of work at The Project Room in the exhibition *Kom Nader*.

Rudolf Seibeb's work occupies a compelling space between abstraction and the observation of reality, reflecting both the complexity of the human condition and the artist's own lived experience.

For Seibeb, art has always been inseparable from life. Early on, he explored a variety of trades but always returned to creative expression — an inherited talent he could not ignore. Originally self-taught, his artistic journey took shape in the 1990s when he studied at the John Muafangejo Art Centre, an institution central to the development of many Namibian artists. Since then, he has remained an active presence in the country's art scene, regularly participating in workshops and exhibitions while steadily building a distinct voice of his own.

Seibeb works predominantly with acrylic on canvas but approaches painting with a multi-media sensibility. Found objects — iron, wood, concrete, tree roots, even animal skin — are incorporated into his practice, either as sculptural assemblages or combined with his paintings. His tactile, action-oriented approach reflects his philosophy of “using what you have to do what you can.” For him, art is not only a form of personal expression but also a tool for education and community engagement, offering insights into cultural, social, and environmental issues.

In *Kom Nader*, Seibeb draws from his own shifting experience of aging and sight. “I have recently started losing some sight. Things are blurry,” he explains. “When one loses one's sight with age, you realise that you cannot sit still but have to move... Things become clearer the closer you get to them.” This metaphor of movement — both physical and symbolic — underpins the exhibition. His vivid canvases and sculptural works remind us that clarity, like hope, often comes only when we draw closer.

The works are alive with layered colour and bold, fractured lines. Faces and bodies emerge and dissolve, overlap and reform, capturing the rhythm of motion and pause, blur and focus. Inspired by his community and his observations of the human condition, they reveal life as



something never still, always shifting. For this exhibition, Seibeb also presents sculptural assemblages, transformed with his unmistakable palette and energy, further expanding his language of resilience and possibility.

Since 2020, Seibeb has worked closely with The Project Room, where he held his first solo exhibition *Hokverhale – Navigating the Lockdown*. This was followed by *Mens(gemaak)* in 2022, along with participation in several group exhibitions and art fairs. He has exhibited widely in Namibia and South Africa, including at the RMB Latitudes Art Fair and FNB Art Joburg, positioning himself as an important voice in contemporary African art.

Kom Nader is not only a continuation of Seibeb's career-long exploration of the human face, form, and condition, but also a deeply personal meditation on vision, aging, and perseverance. By embracing change and imperfection, he offers us work that is both a mirror of life and a testament to hope. *Kom Nader* will be on show from 10 October to 8 November. ❖



Toni's Fachwerk

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

*A fresh take on tradition
– step into a beautifully
restored Swakopmund
landmark for hearty food,
warm hospitality, and global
flavours with local flair.*

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



The Fachwerk is one of Swakopmund's historic buildings. Built in 1899 in half-timbered style on behalf of the German Colonial Society, "Fachwerk" refers to a traditional timber-framed construction method in which a visible wooden framework is filled with materials like brick, clay, or plaster. This architectural style, common in Germany and parts of Europe, combines structural strength with decorative charm and has been used for centuries in residential and public buildings.

Over the years, Fachwerk has changed hands several times and served as both a residential and commercial

space. It was first converted into a restaurant in 2019, after a chic, modern extension was added to the rear. In 2021, it went into a long hibernation and, under new ownership, reawakened in February 2025.

"We are Tonia and Matthias. We've loved gastronomy since our student days and have many years of international experience, most recently with two restaurants of our own abroad.

This year, we became the proud owners of the Fachwerk. We're a meeting place for young and old, families or singles, locals or visitors - right in the heart

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—TRAVEL—



24 | OCTOBER 2025



Earth has volcanoes, while other celestial bodies can have cryovolcanoes that erupt icy particles.



of Swakopmund's Central Business District. We welcome every guest, even if they just want to enjoy an ice-cold beer in our green beer garden."

Toni's Fachwerk has received a modern makeover and now offers typical Namibian cuisine alongside favourites from around the world.

"We collected many of the recipes on our travels. We loved the Caribbean rotis, the Asian chicken noodles, and the key lime pie that sweetened our days in Florida. Our guests love our lamb potjiekos, our game steaks and, of course, the schnitzel."

The building, with all its charm, is also ideal for functions and celebrations of all kinds. Baby shower with balloon decorations? A lively birthday party in the beer garden? Business meetings or a cosy family breakfast? Fachwerk not only offers more private rooms for special events, but also brings its culinary flair to your home table.

"Our entire team does its best to fulfil all requests... and sometimes even make the seemingly impossible possible - with heart and a great deal of flexibility."

Toni's Fachwerk Restaurant & Catering CC, located at 7 Tobias Hainyeko Street in Swakopmund, is open Monday to Saturday from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM and on Sundays from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. ❖

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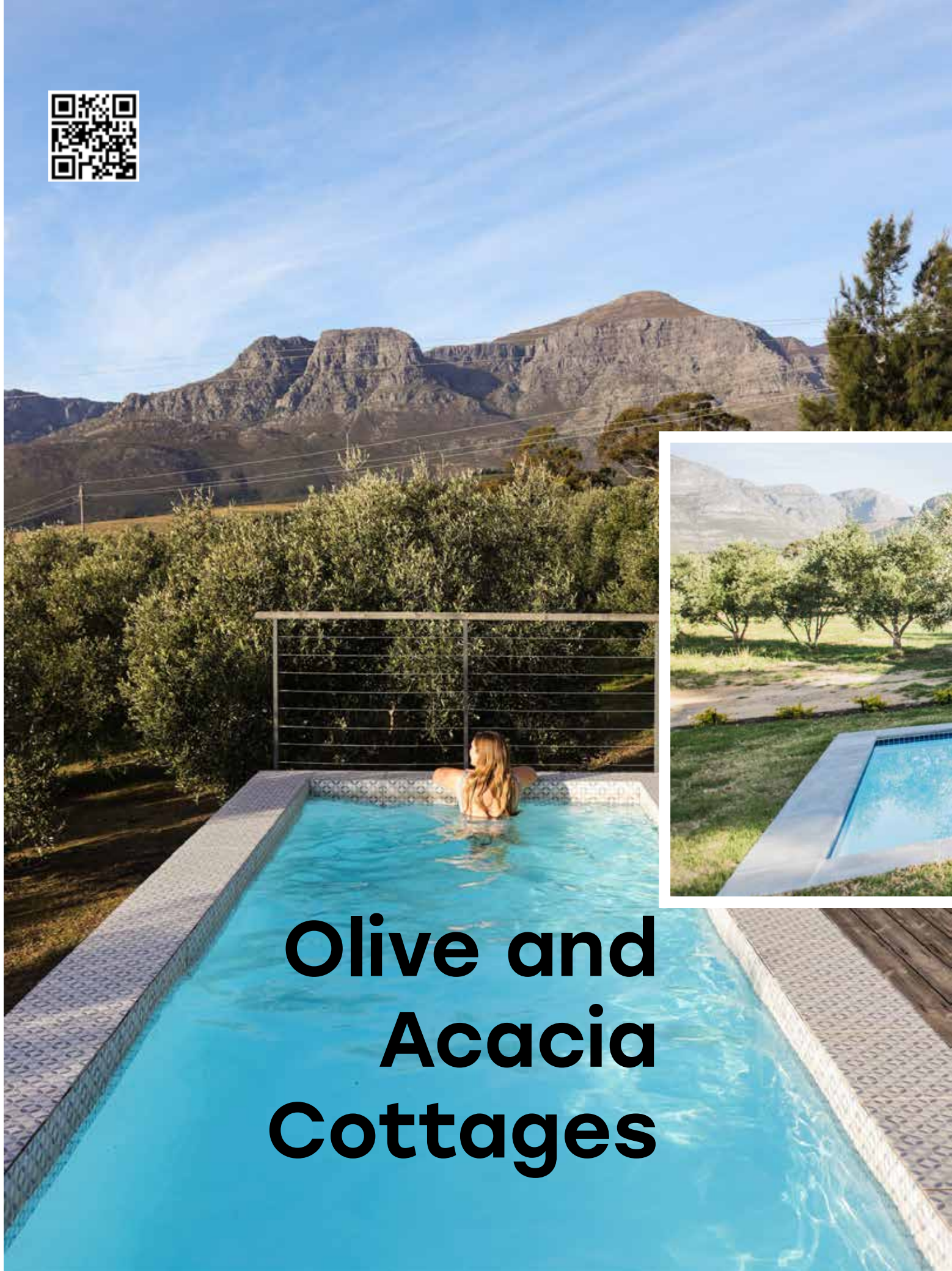
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Olive and Acacia Cottages

A private olive-grove hideaway in the Cape Winelands; cosy cottages, hot tubs, and Bainskloof adventures.

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs supplied



Bainskloof is, naturally speaking, quite simply, quite, quite beautiful, and these cottages offer the perfect mountain-and-winelands escape in Wellington, in the Cape Winelands. The flora encompasses an astounding 277 varieties of flowering plants, while the fauna includes 182 bird species in addition to otters, jackals, leopards, honey badgers, klipspringers, grysbok, steenbok, endangered frogs, and unique fish. A whole lot of nature to explore and absorb. And for those who like a little adventure with their relaxation, Bainskloof is designed for lovers of mountain biking, hiking, and swimming in freshwater pools.

Both Olive and Acacia Cottages are set in the heart of a small olive grove, guaranteeing just the right amount of privacy. Each has a queen-sized, en-suite, air-conditioned bedroom; a spacious interior; a fully equipped kitchen; an indoor fireplace; and a wood-fired hot tub — an idyllic couples' getaway.



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—TRAVEL—



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And when you've allowed nature to do its thing, it's time to head out. Recommended wining and dining opportunities include: James Sedgwick Whisky Distillery; Mila Restaurant at Doolhof; Bosman Wines; Diemersfontein Wine & Country Estate; Fifty Five Croissants, Wellington; and Jaart Restaurant.

If you're looking for a few nice-to-dos, consider Wellington Golf Club; Wellington Museum; Bainskloof Pass; and the Bobbejaans River Trail (Bainskloof).

If your head and heart are saying "head for the country", start packing. Acacia and Olive Cottages are calling. 🍷

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Dear Diary



The Friendship Hidden in a Gemstone

When people hear “Namibia,” their thoughts often go straight to the famous Big Five: lion, buffalo, elephant, rhino and, if you’re lucky enough to spot it, the ever-elusive leopard. Seeing these animals in the wild is an unforgettable experience, and yes, the leopard is as difficult to find as my reading glasses on a Monday morning.

But Namibia is more than wildlife. It’s also a land of cultures, home to around a dozen different ethnic groups: Ovambo, Herero, Damara, San, Nama, Kavango, Himba, and many more. Each adds its own rhythm, colour, and tradition to the vibrant soul of the country.

And then, of course, there are the diamonds. Namibia’s diamond history began in 1908, when a railway worker near Lüderitz picked up glittering stones from the desert sand and unknowingly sparked a treasure hunt. From the famous Sperrgebiet — the “forbidden zone” — to today’s high-tech marine mining off the Skeleton Coast, diamonds have always been a sparkling part of Namibia’s story.

Yet few people know about Namibia’s other treasures hidden in the earth: aquamarine, amethyst, pietersite, garnet, and my personal favourite, tourmaline.

My love affair with gemstones began in a rather unromantic way: all my jewellery was stolen. (Admittedly, it wasn’t much, but the sentimental value was priceless.) Around that time, I met Hannes, who had moved from Germany a little before I did. He happens to prospect and dig for tourmalines, and over the years he has unearthed stones so breathtaking that I couldn’t help but catch his

enthusiasm. Tourmalines, with their dazzling range of colours — vibrant greens, dreamy blues, delicate pinks, and the famous watermelon mix — quickly became my weakness.

Our friendship grew out of long conversations about Namibia, our dogs, leatherwork (Hannes is also a leather specialist), and, of course, the irresistible sparkle of stones. Together with my friend and goldsmith, Frieda Lühl, I began turning these gems into jewellery. Each piece tells its own story: unearthed by Hannes, designed with Frieda, and infused with the spirit of Namibia.

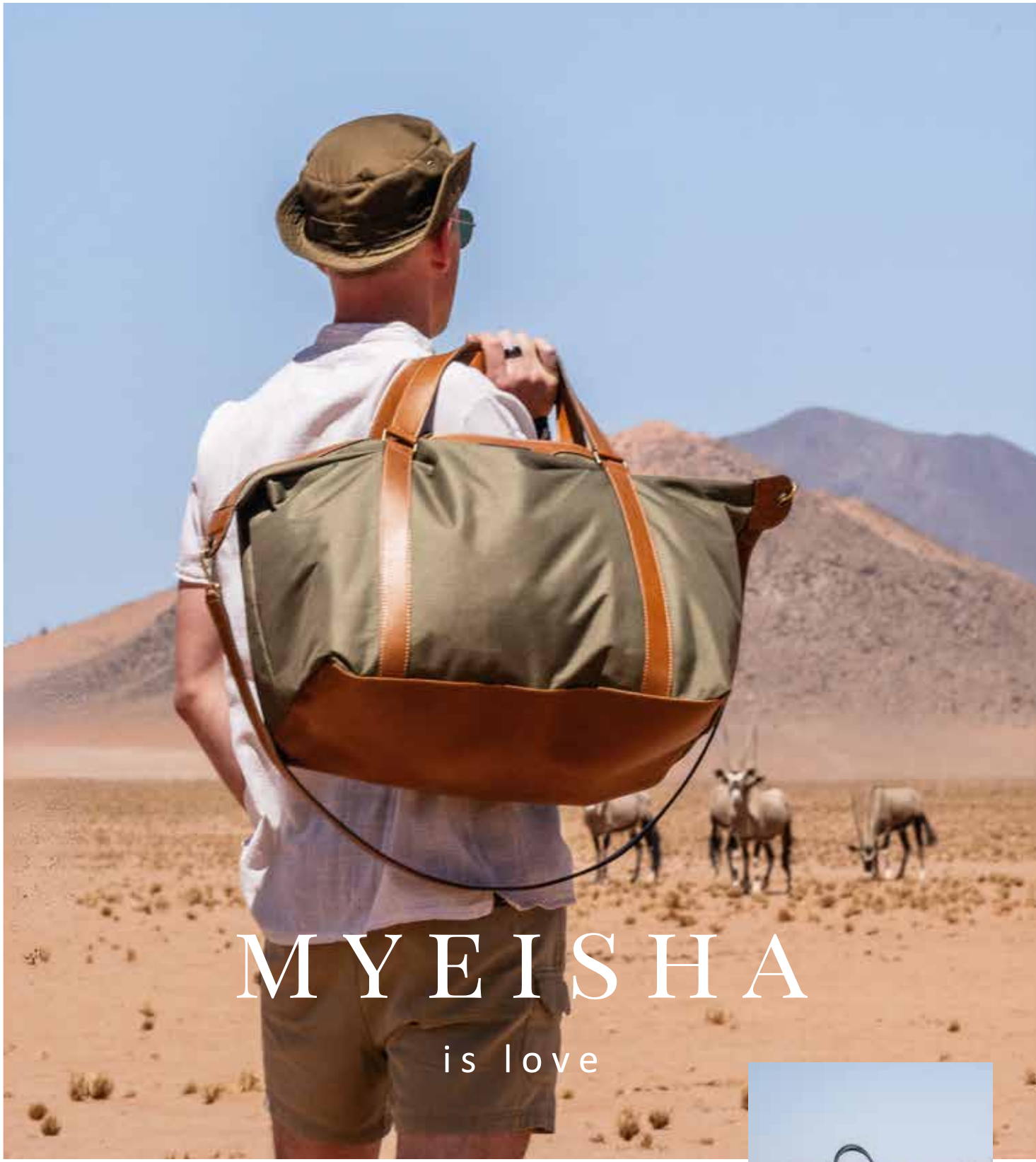
Two years ago, at Myeisha Leather Products, we even created the Diamond Range — a line of bags featuring a tourmaline in our coin logo, symbolizing Namibia’s gems, wildlife, landscapes, and cultures. It felt like weaving my personal journey directly into the brand.

And tourmaline is more than just beautiful. Often called the stone of calm, it’s believed to soothe the nervous system, ease tension, and even help with ailments like rheumatism. Personally, even if you don’t believe in the healing powers, one look at its sparkle in the sunlight is enough to warm your heart and carry a little piece of Namibia with you every day.

So yes, sometimes gemstones create more than just jewellery. They create stories, friendships, and connections — just as they did for me.

Do you already have a Namibian gemstone with a story to tell? I’d love to hear it; share it with me at **deardiary@myeishanamibia.com**.

Until next time,
Sandra. ❖

A person wearing a white t-shirt, olive shorts, a tan bucket hat, and sunglasses is seen from behind, carrying a large green and brown bag. They are standing in a desert landscape with sand dunes and mountains in the background. Several oryx are grazing in the distance.

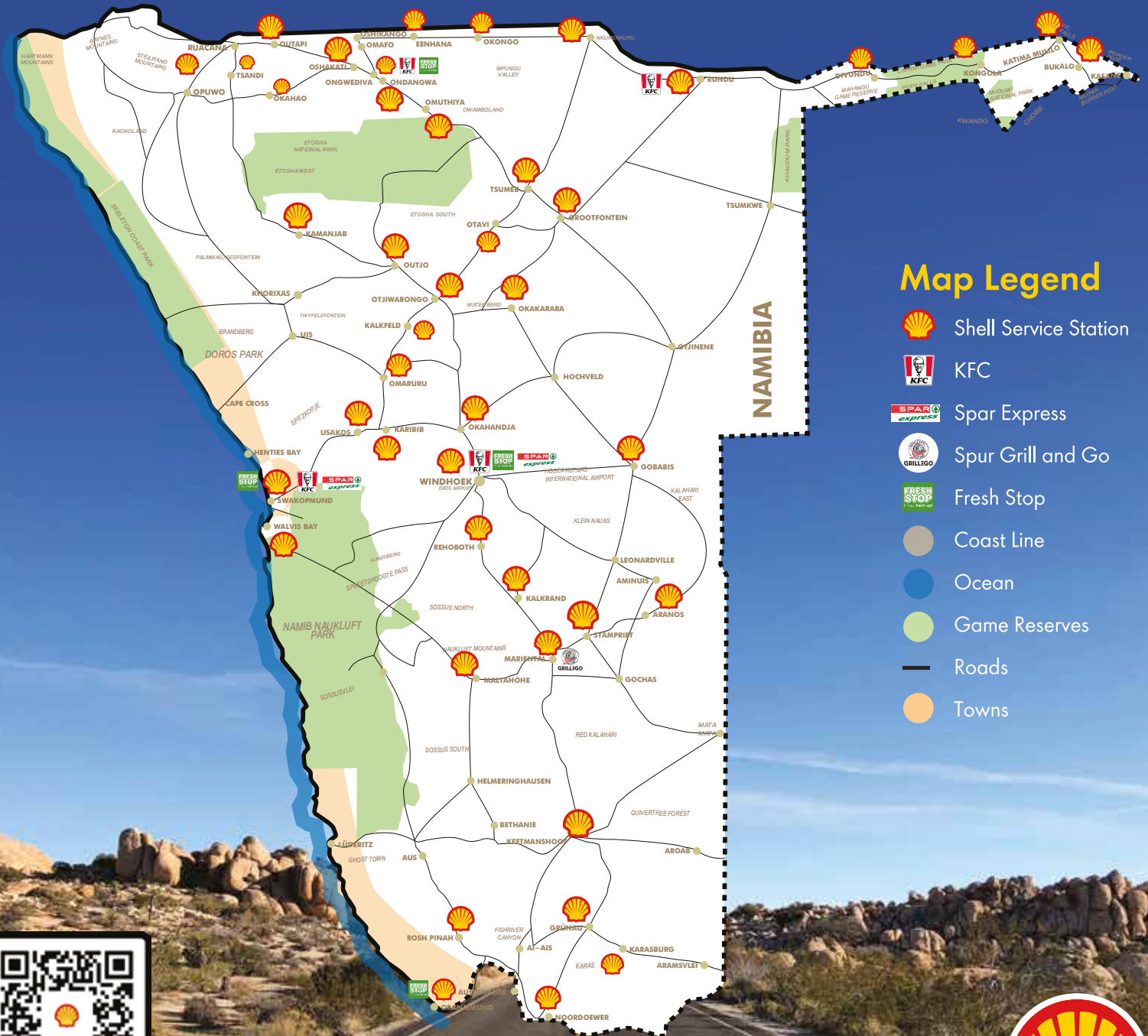
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through quiet woodlands, villages, and baobab horizons before meeting the Kavango's green belt. At the lodge, tranquillity continues, silent river cruises, curated onboard dining, and unhurried evenings at The Fancy Fisherman, our fireside pub where stories and local gin flow. As the only upmarket stay for 130 kilometres, Simanya is a true hideaway: a gentle threshold from arid plains to riverside serenity, where the journey naturally slows.



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Internet usage	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
CPE	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
(12-month service duration including installation)	5,119	5,579	5,819	8,059

Speedlink liteplus (Asymmetric)

Package/Contract Period	25Mbps	50Mbps	75Mbps	100Mbps
Download Speed (up to)	25Mbps	50Mbps	75Mbps	100Mbps
Upload Speed (up to)	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	35Mbps
Internet usage	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
CPE	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Monthly charge (N\$) (12-month)	749	879	1,159	1,979
Monthly charge (N\$) (24-month)	679	789	1,039	1,779
Monthly charge (N\$) (36-month)	639	749	979	1,679

Speedlink liteplus (Symmetric)

Package/Contract Period	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	50Mbps
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Upload Speed (up to)	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	50Mbps
Internet usage	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
CPE	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
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Mind, Body and Sole...

*The Damaraland Camino,
slackpacking under Namibia's
brightest skies*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



“Walking in Namibia is never just about covering ground,” says Ellen Horlebein, who heads up Wild Cherry Adventures. “It’s about slipping into a slower rhythm, leaving behind the everyday rush, and noticing how nourishing it can feel to move lightly through wide, open spaces. Guests often tell us the magic lies as much in the details as in the landscapes: the comfort of carrying only a small daypack while our team takes care of everything else; the ease of arriving at camp to find shade, a warm meal, and tents already prepared; and the evenings gathered together by the fire under skies alive with stars. There is a gentleness to it, yet also a deep sense of adventure.”

Ellen loves the camino hikes - Wild Cherry Adventures has four - Brandberg, Damaraland, Kaokoveld, Kunene, and next year, a fifth, Tiras Mountains. She feels they bring people together in a very special way: strangers at the start, and by the end, friends. “The real magic happens when people share the rhythm of walking side by side.” Wild Cherry also offers the caminos for private groups — friends, family, colleagues, or even hiking clubs. One daypack, one small soft duffel bag, and a heap of dreams: it’s the start of something special.

The Damaraland Camino is considered Wild Cherry’s most accessible trail, combining Brandberg’s striking



desert scenery with a walking pace that suits many. Beginning and ending in Windhoek, all transportation to the trailhead and back is included. It's a fully catered, 6-day, 5-night slackpacking experience that takes you through the stunning landscapes between Camp Madisa and the Brandberg White Lady Lodge across Damaraland. Covering roughly 60 km — between 12 and 16 km per day — this trail explores one of Namibia's most scenic regions at a relaxed pace, with no more than 16 participants per camino.

The trail meanders through remote and breathtaking landscapes, with the Brandberg Mountain your constant guide. Clearly, you're encouraged to walk the trail, but the team understands that sometimes a participant has limits...so the back-up vehicle is always available if you need to take a break, walk less, or simply enjoy a more relaxed day. Hop into the vehicle. There's a flexibility to the camino, so whether you're up for a full day's hiking or prefer to rest and soak in the scenery for a while, they've got you covered. This way, the journey remains enjoyable for all, allowing you to walk as much or as little as you like.

Throughout your adventure, a dedicated 4-person Wild Cherry Adventures support team takes care of all logistics — from cooking and cleaning to setting up your tents and camp amenities. They handle it all so you can fully immerse yourself in the experience.

This camino is a mobile camping expedition, combining both formal campsites and wild camping spots. At each stop, the support team manages all camp duties, and your camping comforts are taken care of, with a canvas cubicle for private showers and a separate setup for toilet facilities. Your privacy is a priority, so you can relax and refresh after each day's hike.

One of the most magical aspects of the Damaraland Camino is the opportunity to experience the night sky like never before. With zero light pollution in the remote wilderness surrounding the Brandberg, the stars are incredibly vivid, transforming the night into a stunning celestial display. The clear desert air reveals a breathtaking panorama where the Milky Way stretches across the sky, and countless constellations, planets, and shooting stars become visible.

Whether you're looking to reconnect with yourself, bond with like-minded travellers, or simply get lost in the vastness of the Namibian wilderness, this Damaraland

The olive tree of Vouves in Crete is over 4,000 years old and still produces olives today.



Camino offers more than just a physical journey. It's a conscious retreat into the untouched beauty of Damaraland. The word camino is Spanish for “way, path, or road.” It can also be used figuratively to describe a course of action, a life's journey, or any spiritual path of self-reflection.

Linka from New Zealand is just one person who shared her thoughts on a camino, on TripAdvisor:

“How do you begin to describe a walk like this one? It's more than just a walk, it's extraordinary, soul-changing, humbling, and inspirational. From sharing our deepest stories and wiping tears away to laughing until your tummy and cheeks hurt. All while your feet touch this sacred piece of land we walked on.

“Important to note that you don't come on this camino with the expectation of losing weight, because you will be spoilt with the most delicious food (yes, we had pancakes

while walking that even got the intermittent faster breaking her morning fast). Every meal was a new surprise. This camino exceeded every expectation I possibly could've had prior to embarking on this journey. Steve, George, and Ruben were amazing, hard-working, kind, respectful, excellent chefs, and attentive to our every need (including providing us with spectacular shower and tent views)!

“And Ellen... she has such a big heart and is passionate about nature, Namibia, the people, the land, and every single person who walks with her. This is a journey that helped me heal and created lasting memories. I recommend it to any nature lover, but be warned — this camino has the ability to change you (for the better)!”

Ellen sees their mantra as: “We create experiences that blend adventure, mindfulness, and environmental respect.” Sound like up your street? Then make the call. 🍷



Camping, but smarter

A family story from Etosha

So, here's the thing about my family: dad has been camping for years. He's comfortable in the outdoors, knows how to set up a tent, and genuinely loved being surrounded by nature. For him, camping is a happy place, a way to disconnect and recharge. The rest of us – me, Mom, my sister – we like nature, sure, but the actual process of camping? Let's just say we approach it with a little caution.

Our first real family camping trip was...memorable. Dad, as always, was full of excitement, unpacking the car before the rest of us had even parked properly. "Pitching a tent is part of the adventure!" he said carefully. Mom and I exchanged glances, silently wondering how "adventure" involved untangling a mess of poles that somehow seemed to multiply as you tried to assemble them. My sister had found the cooler and was enthusiastically dumping snacks across the ground, while I discovered, much to my horror, that we had packed six packets of marshmallows and no coffee. Not one. For me, the caffeine-deprived adult in the group, this was serious business.

By the time the sun was setting, we had finally managed to get the tent standing. It wasn't perfect, but it was standing, and that felt like a small victory. We had to get the fire going, with dad giving step-by-step instructions and the rest of us nodding along while secretly wondering if this fire would ever ignite. Finally, sparks flew, smoke drifted dramatically in the wind, and after a few attempts, we had flames. Marshmallows were toasted, slightly charred, and eaten with pleasure.

Night fell, and with it, the usual chaos. Sleeping bags became wrestling mats, air mattresses deflated quietly in the corner, and mom was gently muttering to herself about forgotten items – salt, a flashlight, anything to make things slightly easier. Somewhere, a cricket or something else tiny and loud set up a personal soundtrack just for me, keeping me awake for longer than I wanted. My dad was unsurprisingly unfazed by the minor disasters of the night. And I? I laid there, staring at the roof of the tent, trying to convince myself that this was worth it.





Morning came with the magic that makes camping unforgettable: the soft golden light spilling over the Etosha plains, birds calling, and a breeze that smelled like grass and earth. Suddenly, the chaos of the previous night seemed trivial. You forget the minor annoyances, the missing coffee, the beetle that had apparently made itself at home in the tent, and you're left with the sheer wonder of being outdoors in Namibia. And yes, camping really is magical.

Still, we all knew it wasn't entirely our thing. The experience was beautiful, don't get me wrong, but the practical side of camping – packing, setting up, managing little crisis, was exhausting for the rest of the family. We loved it in theory, but somehow, in practice, we were a bit out of our element.

Then, on another trip, we discovered a subtle change that made all the difference: Gondwana Collection Namibia's Camping2Go. By the time we arrived, the tent was already set up, with beds made, soft linens in place, and even a little kitchen area, with everything we could need. There was a fire pit waiting for dad's braai skills, and yes, a proper bathroom – game-changer!

It was still camping. Still Etosha. Still surrounded by wildlife, with the stars shining overhead and the sounds of the Namibian night filling the air. But now, it was easier, smoother, and more joyful for everyone. Dad still got his fire, his stars, and his stories, but even he admitted he loved this version more. It was the perfect balance: adventure, laughter, and connection, with just enough comfort to make it possible for all of us to truly enjoy the experience.

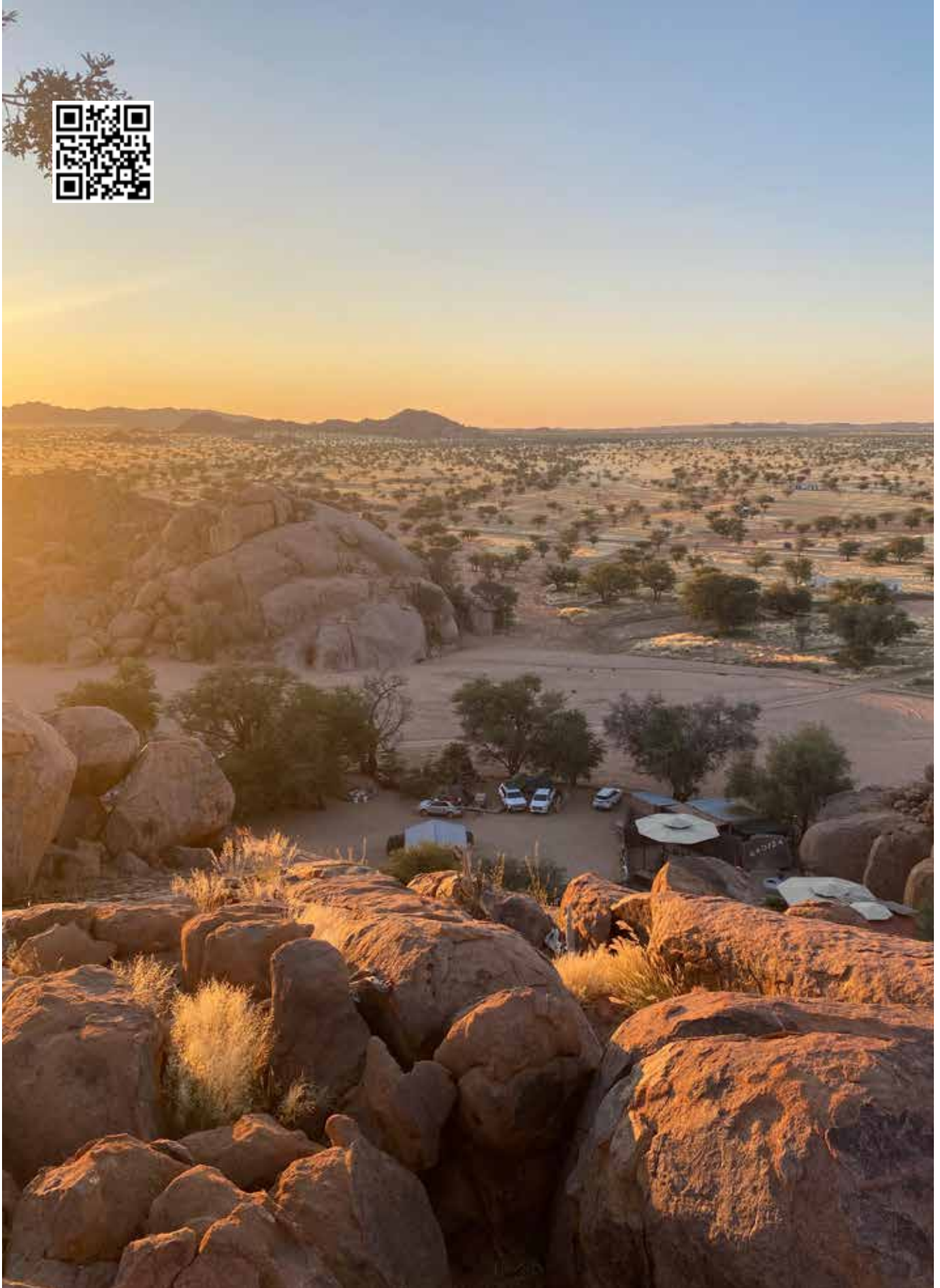
By the time we left, we were already planning our next trip. Because camping had always been magical, but now, it was fun for everyone. And for families like ours, where only one person has decades of camping experience, this subtle upgrade made all the difference.

Looking back, it's clear that the magic of camping doesn't have to be complicated. With Gondwana Collection's Camping2Go, the magic of the outdoors stayed completely intact, but the little stresses that sometimes come with camping disappeared. Nature, stars, laughter, and memories – it all came alive in a way that made us fall in love with camping all over again.

Text: Jandia van Wyk | Images: Gondwana Collection Namibia | Layout: Geena Visagie



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Madisa Camp, Damaraland

*Stilted bathrooms, shaded sites, and guided
elephant-tracking in true wilderness*

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs supplied



Madisa Camp, nestled in the heart of Namibia's breathtaking Damaraland, offers a unique blend of adventure, comfort, and natural beauty. This camp is a haven for nature lovers and adventure seekers alike, providing a range of accommodation options that cater to all types of travellers.

For those who enjoy the rustic charm of camping, Madisa Camp offers nine well-equipped Private Campsites, each featuring private bathrooms elevated on stilts, ensuring privacy and comfort amid the wild landscape. These sites are shaded by large Mopane trees, providing a cool retreat in the heat of the day. The camp also caters to overland groups with five spacious sites ideal for larger gatherings, making it a perfect stop for those exploring Namibia by road.

For a more luxurious stay, the camp's eight safari tents offer a comfortable and immersive experience. Each tent is thoughtfully designed to blend with the natural

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Every two minutes, we take more photographs than all of humanity did during the entire 19th century.



surroundings, providing all the modern amenities you need while maintaining a close connection with the environment. The tents are strategically placed to offer stunning views, ensuring that you wake up to the beauty of the Namibian wilderness each day.

Madisa Camp is not just a place to stay; it's a gateway to adventure. Guests can embark on guided elephant-tracking excursions, exploring the terrain in open game-viewers in search of elusive desert-adapted elephants. After a day of exploration, guests can relax by the camp's rock pool, enjoy meals prepared on open fires, and end the day under a sky filled with stars.

Whether you're seeking a thrilling adventure or a peaceful retreat, Madisa Camp provides an unforgettable experience in one of Namibia's most stunning regions. ❖



Slice of Life

by Jescey Bekker

Spring Fever, Hay Fever, and Garden Fever



As the seasons continue to shift, days grow longer and evenings warmer. Namibia is steadily heading through spring, en route to summer. With the brighter days also comes the urge to spring-clean, as blankets and coats are stuffed back into cupboards. A new vigour is applied as “out with the old and in with the new” sets in.

What this period looks like in our home is, more or less, chaotic with a dramatic undertone. This theme is very much my own doing, as vision and practice are misaligned and I fail to manage my expectations. My poor husband.

The core focus of vision and practice is the garden. Flowers are starting to bloom, with sweet nectar attracting bees, and pollen is in abundance. The tiny bit of grass that managed to struggle through winter needs care, but its struggle has left sand patches and plenty of dust clouds. And so, the plans gently nurtured through winter are slowly falling apart...

The tomato plant did not survive the transplant from this area to that one. My vermicompost, which did really well throughout the cold season, has come to a devastating end. My worms have died. What did I do wrong? And with

their demise came the smell of rotten food. Lovely.

A swarm of honeybees has decided to move into my aspiring veggie garden (aspiring being the key term here, because the tomatoes have already died). Trying to salvage any form of plant now is disrupted by dogs, bees, and the task of keeping the toddler upright and away from the “problem areas.”

A Saturday in the garden is rewarded with dusty sunburn and a stuffy nose, with no success in sight. Late evenings are spent looking out from the kitchen window, visualising what I want to see in the garden, making plans on how to plant while keeping the toddler and dogs from uprooting it all again. How am I going to get my vermicompost back on track, and what was the bee-guy’s number again?

Fortunately, I have a full five days between gardening attempts to reboot and be inspired again. So, we progress. Slowly. Very slowly. From Saturday to Saturday, and challenge to challenge. The progress will be visible at some point. I hope.

I will not let spring fever bring me down. 🌸



Cape to Namibia epic...on a motorcycle

It's time to join in and Ride Down South. Explore the Cape Winelands, Fold Mountains, the Great Karoo and Namibia's breathtaking desert landscapes, night skies and rich wildlife on this 14-day motorcycle adventure

edited by Anne Schauffer | photographs supplied



This is that bucket list trip you've been toying with. Toy no more - sit back, and listen. Cape to Namibia, through some of the world's most sensational scenery, with 11 days riding, three non-riding days. You'll cover around 3,300 kilometres, riding around four to six hours a day, about 290 kilometres daily. This is the perfect trip for you if you consider yourself an intermediate driver - tar and gravel/dirt roads, with no deep sand. This ride has been termed 'epic', and that's from those who've done it. Let's see what you say.

Picture it - Namibia's gravel roads, Cape coastal roads and nine mountain passes. The highlights include Cape Town, False Bay Coast, Franschhoek Pass, Bainskloof Pass, Cederberg Mountains, Great Karoo, Cederberg Mountains, Great Karoo, Orange River, Fish River Canyon, Kolmanskop, Sossusvlei Dune, Swakopmund, Sandwich Harbour, Skeleton Coast, Spitzkoppe, a private game reserve, Windhoek...and a whole host of other little gems in between.

This fortnight's adventure is not simply about the various destinations, it extends into the food (all breakfasts included, and dinner on riding days) and wine, the diverse accommodation and, of course, the camaraderie. You'll be staying in a wide range of 3 and 4-star accommodation styles, from guest farms, resorts, retreats and game lodges, to tented camps and bed and breakfasts.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



The tour includes a highly skilled guide, and a support vehicle with luggage space and a spare bike. You'll be riding a Honda Africa Twin CRF1100 or 1000, BMW GS1250, Transalp 750 or NX500 motorcycle, and fuel, insurance and motorcycle return (to Cape Town), is included in the rate, as is the Cape Town/Windhoek transfer flights. Tours to Sossusvlei and Deadvlei, as well as a game drive safari at Omaruru Game Reserve, are also part of the experience.

Talk to Andrew Vaughan at Ride Down South. You'll be captivated. 🍷



Meatco Foundation Driving Social Impact in Namibia's Livestock Sector

How Corporate Social Investment (CSI) builds resilience for farmers and communities





PROJECTS ACROSS NAMIBIA INCLUDE:

- Rehabilitation of the Gam Auction Crush Pen (including fencing and an additional kraal for sick animals).
- Upgrading the Goreses Borehole with a solar system, providing sustainable water access for over 350 community members and their livestock.
- Upgrading the Oshifikwa Auction Crush Pen.
- Rebranding of Meatco NCA and Meatma Ongwediva.
- The Ohangwena Livestock Marketing Cooperative – Bush-to-Feed.
- European Development Fund (EDFI) - Livestock Value Chain Development and Climate Change Resilient Action in the Northern Communal Areas of Namibia (LDCR-NCA).
- The Opuwo Rangeland Rehydration Project, where more than 100 erosion-control filters were installed across six gullies to restore fragile ecosystems.
- AgriBusiness Facility - Matching Grant Fund (ABF-MGF)
- Implementation of six research projects in collaboration with the University of Namibia (UNAM), e.g., Marula Seed Harvest & Oil.

Meatco Namibia plays a vital role in the country's all-important livestock sector. Equally important is the work of its wide-reaching CSI vehicle – the Meatco Foundation – which continues to make a major impact on the socio-economy of associated communities.

The success of Namibia's red meat industry is of national importance, making the role of the Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco) critical to the nation and its people. As a processor and marketer of beef, Meatco promotes and coordinates the interests of Namibian livestock producers while ensuring that the country's products retain their internationally sought-after characteristics.

Sourcing cattle from farmers across Namibia, Meatco relies on strong, decades-long partnerships with producers committed to responsible livestock farming practices. This trust, support, and interaction lie at the heart of Meatco's operations and success.

Alongside its commercial mandate, Meatco drives meaningful change through its corporate social responsibility vehicle – the Meatco Foundation. Acting Executive Officer Dalicia Olivier describes its mission clearly: "Our goal is to improve the livelihood of Namibian communal livestock farmers, and we do this via capacity building and sustainable development interventions."

The Foundation's developmental footprint is extensive, with long-standing projects reaching key milestones and new partnerships being cultivated. Over N\$26.4 million was committed to community development and agricultural

sustainability projects (up from N\$24 million in 2023 and N\$18.9 million in 2022).

The impact of these initiatives is tangible: farmers report increased disposable incomes, communities enjoy better access to education and healthcare, local economies are boosted through job creation and spending, and farmers reinvest in their livestock and equipment to ensure long-term growth. Many of the infrastructure projects also serve multiple purposes, benefiting entire communities.

Looking ahead, the Foundation aims to reinforce Meatco's sustainability credentials by expanding interventions such as the Bush-to-Feed programme and sustainable rangeland practices into more communal areas. It will also continue investing in infrastructure, water security, and agricultural practices that improve household incomes and resilience. In parallel, Meatco and Meatco NCA are enhancing their regional presence, helping producers access commercial markets through retail outreach and awareness campaigns.

As Namibia's red meat industry continues to evolve, Meatco and the Meatco Foundation remain steadfast in their dual mission: to champion local producers in competitive markets while uplifting the communities that form the backbone of the sector. By combining commercial excellence with meaningful social investment, Meatco strengthens not only the livestock industry but also Namibia's broader socio-economic resilience. In doing so, it secures its position as both a trusted industry leader and a partner in sustainable nation-building. ❖



MICHELLE WARDEN'S POSTCARDS TO NAMIBIA



Three Months in Tāmaki Makaurau:

“Sweet as” until it wasn’t

*From peanut butter tears to flat white cheers, the
messy magic of starting over in Aotearoa.*

Hoezit-hoezit, mense! It's been three months since we packed up our lives in six suitcases and carry-on luggage, kissed our comfort zone goodbye, and landed in Tāmaki Makaurau - Auckland, for the uninitiated. The city of sails, volcanic cones, and a population that says "sweet as" to literally everything from "okay" to "life is beautiful."

I was ready to embrace my new life, armed with a vague idea of what a "flat white" was and a deep-seated confidence that I could handle anything, because hey, I was born in Outjo!

The first couple of weeks were a confusing blur of jet lag, trying to find my feet, and struggling to decode the mystery of the Kiwi accent. I learned quickly that "yeah nah" means no, "nah yeah" means yes, and "she'll be right" is the national motto.

Aotearoa feels like the far-off cousin I didn't know I had. Familiar, but with oddities that can make me giggle and occasionally wonder. People here recycle dutifully, walk barefoot in public, go to the shops without makeup, and treat rugby like a sacrosanct rite. There's a deep respect for the land, for culture, and for the idea that life should be lived outdoors - even when it's raining sideways. Very similar to the Namibian way of life, except we run outside to catch the first drops of rain, then quickly run back in and take a shower so we don't catch a cold, and we dress up to go to the shops because you will see at least 56 people that you know.

Speaking of sideways rain... Auckland's winter felt like someone left the fridge door open and forgot to close it. It was damp, moody, windy, and the constant kind of cold that makes you reconsider all your life choices while waiting for the bus or getting national cell phone tsunami warnings. Now, Tāmaki Makaurau is languidly stretching into spring. The vibrant magnolia trees permeate the air with their sweet vanilla fragrance, the days are getting a tad bit longer, and the birds are chirping much louder and happier at 3 in the morning. The locals are still mowing their lawns, but now with questionable shorts choices. Meanwhile, back home in the Land of the Brave, spring arrived with instant

warmer temperatures, bringing with it the smell of braai at dusk, the sound of neighbours prepping the garden to plant, and the annual debate over whether it's too early to have Christmas decorations in Checkers.

But let me not romanticize it too much. Immigration isn't just a Pinterest board of sunsets and brilliant new beginnings.

It's also about crying in Pack'nSave because you can't find your favourite brand of peanut butter. That moment isn't really about peanut butter. It's about the quiet grief of losing familiarity. Of realizing that even the mundane like grocery shopping, small talk, and weather complaints, must be relearned. I miss the dusty chaos of Windhoek, the way you know everyone, the way all the WhatsApp groups drive you insane. I just miss being known.

It's feeling like a fraud when you say "home" and not knowing which place you mean.

Then there's the fear. Fear of not belonging. Of being the odd one out and never quite getting the hang of the local slang in an Afrikaans accent, or the bus system (seriously, why does the AT app feel like it's gaslighting me?).

But alongside the fear and the missing and the fraud feelings, there's something else. Tiny little victories that feel hugely monumental. Like figuring out how to top up your HOP card or pronouncing "Papatoetoe" correctly on the fifth try. Or making a Kiwi belly-laugh because they understood the joke and weren't just being polite.

I miss my Windhoek home. I miss the smell of fresh Baines brötchens, the sound of my friends' laughter, my mom's hugs, my brother's wit, our own house, and the way our little city lights up at night. But I'm slowly falling in love with my Auckland home - with its quirks, its kindness, and its quiet insistence that I slow down and breathe.

So here's a "cheers" to the next chapter in this Kiwi adventure and the slow, beautiful process of becoming someone new and embracing the change. Because if there's one thing I've learned in three months, it's that immigration doesn't come with a manual, but in Aotearoa, it does come with a flat white and a cheeky grin. 🍷



One Nation, One Price



Levelling the playing field by bringing equal, affordable digital connectivity to every corner of Namibia



Gridonline was launched in 2019

“Why should a customer sitting in the south or north pay more for services, while customers in Windhoek or Okahandja pay less? Let’s make everyone happy.” This was said by NamPower Senior Engineer, Victoria Shivute, at the recent product update session of NamPower’s GridOnline bulk data backhauling service, with flat-rate pricing and expanded offerings.

The service aims to boost affordable digital connectivity across Namibia and the wider Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Originally launched six years ago, the new services aim to continue empowering telecom providers and wholesalers by offering increased, faster, and affordable national bandwidth.

The product update session introduced new services and pricing. The old pricing, which charged based on fibre distance and varied by zone, is replaced by a simple flat-rate system called ‘**One Nation, One Price.**’

Previously, customers who were farther from key network points paid more because the pricing was based on the distance their fibre connection covered.

NamPower's GridOnline team at an event in September unveiled new service offerings limited to licensed operators: GoConnect, FlexConnect, and GridNet, along with an exciting new website, www.go.com.na, which contains the detailed new pricing structures and a Keyhole Markup Language (KML) file depicting the fibre routes and points of presence (PoPs) of the GridOnline Network.

NamPower is expanding its managed services for telecom providers, using the network's extra capacity. Its main service now includes bulk data backhauling on major routes, regional links within SADC countries, and access to submarine cables like the West Africa Cable System (WACS) and the Equiano submarine communications cable.

Since 2019, NamPower resolved to share its substantial infrastructure with licensed internet service providers. This also creates an additional revenue stream for the power utility.

Chief Operating Officer Fritz Jacobs, at the event, said: "This initiative ensures that access to digital infrastructure is determined by opportunity, not geography, benefiting both businesses and every Namibian."

Jacobs also emphasised the company's goal to "level the playing field and utilise the extensive and robust fibre network of NamPower to connect communities and serve as an enabling platform for business."

Designed as an open framework, GridOnline allows both start-ups and established companies to access NamPower's fibre optic infrastructure. The move leverages significant investments in transmission infrastructure, essential for managing the grid and securing critical communication channels, including the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) network.

Also speaking at the event, Transmission Executive Leandro Kapolo reaffirmed the company's commitment to continue expanding its network: "Our aim is to provide affordable, reliable connectivity to all communities and support the Fourth Industrial Revolution as enablers."

And yes, there is more in the pipeline. Up to now, NamPower has installed 6,575 km of optical fibre and sold over 235 Gigabits per second (Gbps) of capacity. Kapolo emphasised the importance of collaboration and shared efforts in achieving these milestones.

Unpacking the milestones, Shivute outlined the company's current commercial offerings related to high-speed pipelines:

Milestones

In 2017, the company received a Class Network Facility Telecommunications Service Licence.

By 6 March 2019, it launched its commercial service, starting with the westbound route from Windhoek to Swakopmund.

In 2019, most of NamPower's fibre network was made available to clients of GridOnline, along with the introduction of the first dense wavelength division multiplexing (DWDM) links and a price revision.

The year 2020 saw continued expansion. In 2021, NamPower rolled out DWDM technology across its fibre routes and established its first cross-border connection to South Africa, followed by a second to Zambia.

In 2022, GridOnline connected NamPower to the WACS landing station at Swakopmund. By 2023, GridOnline was elevated to a semi-autonomous department within NamPower.

New Services

GoConnect

The previous transport services were renamed as GoConnect, a point-to-point transport service offering high-speed data rates.

GoConnect brings a dedicated point-to-point transport service, designed to meet the growing demand for fast and reliable data transmission.

The service offers transport rates ranging from 150 Megabits per second (Mbps) to an impressive 800 Gbps. Customers can also opt for prioritisation as an add-on feature.

FlexConnect

With the new offering, known as FlexConnect, GridOnline proudly announced its innovative breakout services, now fully integrated with the GoConnect platform. These services deliver impressive breakout speeds ranging from 1 Gbps to 100 Gbps. Additionally, a new 50 km magnet function is now available, measured over fibre length, enhancing performance at greater distances.

GridNet

The GridNet option provides internet protocol transit (IPT) bulk dedicated internet services. GridOnline offers

backhauling and connections to multiple submarine cables. Clients can advertise their autonomous system (AS) numbers and receive static internet protocol (IP) subnets. These services are available at any of the 102 PoPs.

Clients are advised to bring their own fibre for connection to the PoPs. Additionally, clients are responsible for supplying their own small form-factor pluggable (SFP) modules.

Specially for GridOnline Customers

Specific to GridOnline customers, NamPower has announced that capacity upgrades on all services are generally possible, offering more flexibility to customers. However, downgrades are only available under contract termination, which may incur early termination fees. The company emphasises that the start and end points of a route are fixed for the duration of the contract and cannot be altered.

Service availability, along with technical and financial viability, will be evaluated at NamPower's sole discretion. Additionally, all pricing is based on the equal prioritisation of virtual local area networks (VLANs).

During the update, GridOnline announced that clients can request upgrades for their services and IP addresses at any time, offering increased flexibility for their users. However, the company has also outlined specific conditions regarding downgrades and interconnections. Interconnection services are limited exclusively to GridOnline PoPs, emphasising a specialised network focus.

Additionally, IP subnets are available at only one termination point, which companies should consider when planning their network architecture. The company also specifies that clients are responsible for providing a suitable edge router to facilitate interconnection.

GridOnline also offers cabinet space for clients at selected available locations, which is only accessible to active clients. Clients are responsible for supplying and installing their own cable management systems and labelling.

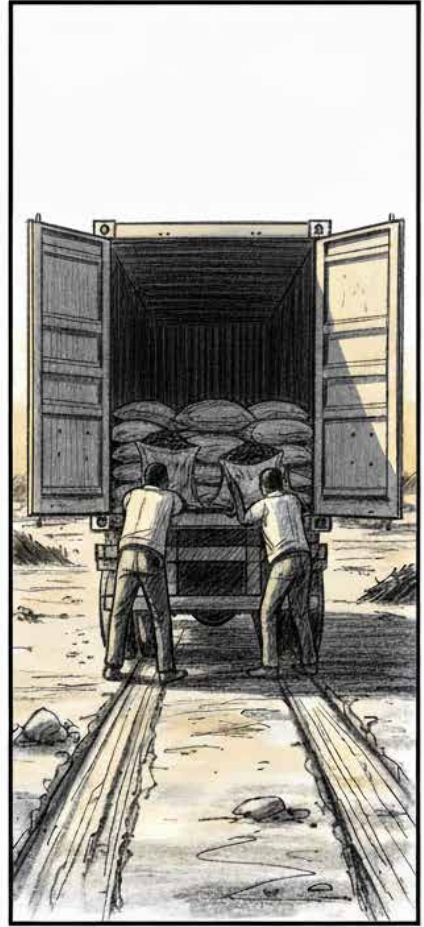
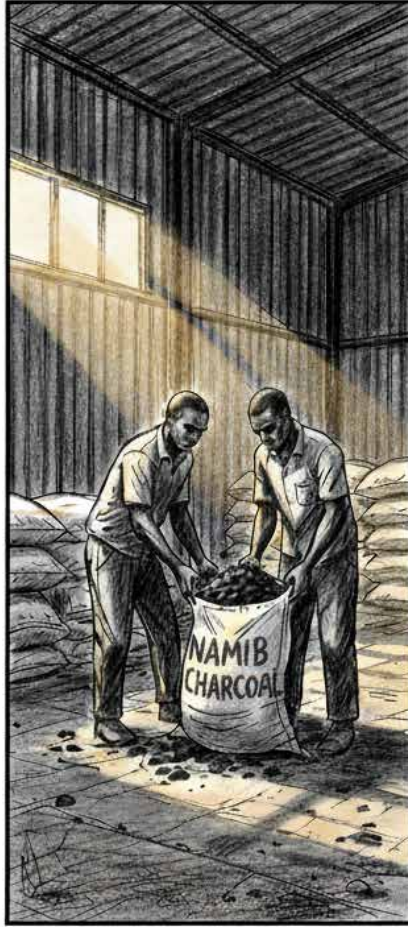
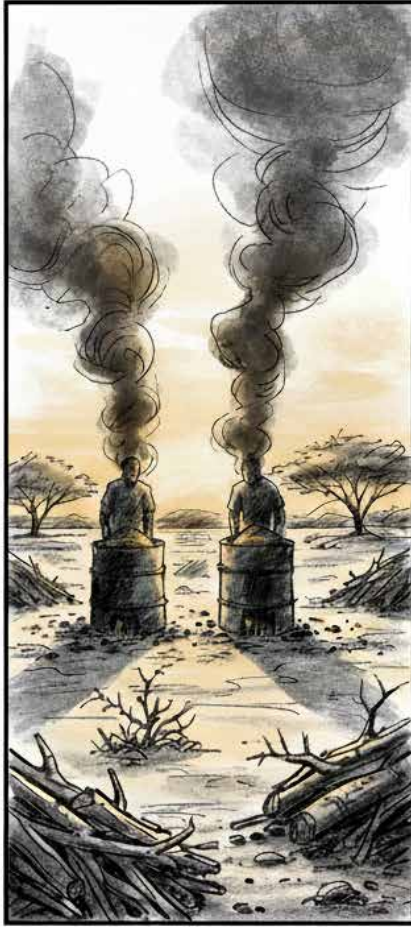
According to Shivute, reliable technology and infrastructure, local expertise, and affordable innovation make GridOnline a standout budget-friendly choice in the industry.

Kapolo concluded: "Only by uniting as an industry with a shared vision can we provide world-class connectivity to every part of our beautiful country and beyond." ❖



Gridonline team with NamPower's Board Deputy Chairperson: Ms. Paulina Elago and NamPower's Chief Operating Officer: Mr Fritz Jacobs at a recent stakeholder breakfast event.





From Problem to Profit

Namibia has turned its bush-encroachment problem into an economic opportunity, becoming a global leader in wood-charcoal exports.

words by Linda de Jager | illustrations by Michelangelo Magazine

“We know that in terms of our factory-gate prices, we are among the most cost-efficient producers in the world.” — Eckhard Volkmann



If you're hosting a braai in South Africa, there's a good chance the charcoal on your grill is from Namibia.

Known as Namibia's black gold, this charcoal is increasingly in demand beyond Southern Africa, with exports to nine major European markets including Germany, France, Portugal, Greece and the UK. The Middle East — particularly Saudi Arabia — is also emerging as a rapidly growing market, according to Eckhard Volkmann, general manager of the Charcoal Association of Namibia. But South Africa remains an important market, he says.

“Some leftover charcoal goes to China, with much of it escaping regulation or quality control, and some is not declared properly, thus partially bypassing our export statistics. Chinese agents here buy and sell it.”

Namibia is the largest exporter of charcoal in Southern Africa. Industry players estimate that up to 70% of the wood charcoal consumed in and exported from South Africa comes from Namibia. Yet there is a gradual move away from exporting raw charcoal to South Africa. Some South African companies are now building processing plants in Namibia. The processed charcoal is then transported by train to Walvis Bay and shipped abroad.

Volkmann says there are 20–30 factories in Namibia. “About 30 charcoal processors are supplied by 600 producers, with 20 processors and their producers being Charcoal Association of Namibia members. Two members are from South Africa.”

Over the past 30 years, Namibia has steadily climbed the ranks in the global market and now sits in third place in wood-charcoal exports by volume. Its charcoal has a unique history linked to burdened farmland and bush encroachment — an ecological problem that has also become an economic opportunity.

Scientist Evert Strydom, founder and CEO of Rangeland Consulting & Services, says a recent study confirms that about 46 million hectares of Namibia — 56% of the country's land surface — are affected by bush encroachment. This makes it one of the most severely affected countries in the world, both in terms of absolute area and the share of national farmland affected.

“In short, Namibia's challenge is larger in terms of scale and severity of rangeland affected, while South Africa faces the added complexity of invasive-species management. Both countries need tailored solutions, but Namibia stands out as the country where bush encroachment covers the greatest proportion of productive land,” he says.

Strydom says that although bush encroachment is a serious ecological challenge, it also highlights a huge biomass resource that can be turned into economic opportunity if harvested responsibly. The most established value chain is charcoal and briquettes, which has grown into one of Namibia's largest rural industries.

“In 2023, Namibia exported about 270,000 tonnes of charcoal, valued at about N\$1.3 billion, creating



70% of South Africa's charcoal comes from Namibia



N\$1.3 billion charcoal exports (2023)

livelihoods for an estimated 10,000–15,000 workers, many of them in remote rural areas. Certified sustainable charcoal, especially under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards, is increasingly sought after in European markets, boosting Namibia's global reputation."

Bodies such as the FSC raise the standard of harvesting practices and socioeconomic responsibility in Namibia, and help distinguish Namibian charcoal from less sustainable alternatives. Volkmann says the international market will increasingly set its requirements and make them verifiable through standardisation processes. "We need to stay ahead of this trend by developing our own standards and quality goals, supported by so-called trade facilitation infrastructure," he says.

Makarra Bushproducts co-owner Michael von Hacht says Namibia's competitiveness in the global charcoal market is partly based on quality and value for money. "We know that in terms of our factory-gate prices, we are among the most cost-efficient producers in the world," says Volkmann.

Von Hacht says demand rose during Covid as more people braaied. But he points out that the business model is not crisis-proof, with relatively small profit margins and challenges such as the need for safety certification for shipping flammable, containerised charcoal by sea. "Quality control, formalisation, a lack of regular spot checks and professionalisation within the industry — particularly at the levels of primary production [harvesting] and first-stage processing [burning] — remain ongoing challenges," he says.

"Smaller, unregulated players in the industry have cut corners in the past, leading to occasional cargo fires and safety concerns. As a result, from early 2026 onwards, charcoal exports will be classified as dangerous goods, increasing costs," Von Hacht says.

Volkmann says: "The spoilers are transport costs, because we are halfway around the world from our market. Our negotiations show no way to unify shipping-line procedures. Six international lines serve our market, but only three export charcoal. They operate independently and, because they are powerful, they impose their practices on us."

Von Hacht says higher average selling prices are often threatened by unscrupulous players, or bulk buyers who mix inferior products with high-quality ones when packaging Namibian charcoal, which has a negative effect on the industry. He says a significant threat to the emerging profitable export market is gas, which is becoming more attractive to the European market due to increasing awareness of sustainability issues in wood harvesting.

This is mainly related to the loss of rainforests, since charcoal production is a major driver of deforestation and releases a minimal amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. "This is becoming an increasing concern for a sophisticated market," he says.

Volkmann says: "On a Saturday afternoon, with good weather and sunshine in Berlin, you walk into the city's 20 ha Tiergarten and you think it's foggy because everyone is barbecuing. Those emissions are no longer acceptable to



Namibia = #3 in global charcoal exports

Rank	Country	Tons Exported	% of Total World Exports
1	China	60,589.10	96%
2	Canada	392.00	1%
3	Namibia	378.54	1%
4	Spain	323.15	1%
5	USA	215.00	0%
6	United Kingdom	186.58	0%
7	Netherlands	182.97	0%
8	Malaysia	83.64	0%
9	France	81.72	0%
10	Thailand	79.51	0%

*Source: Uncommtrade.org

the European consumer in such concentrations.”

This means that if customers hear about bush being cut, they automatically assume producers are involved in deforestation. Not so, says Strydom. “Crucially, the primary benefit of engaging in bush harvesting lies not only in product sales, but also in the restoration of rangeland productivity. By thinning dense stands, farmers recover grazing capacity, improve water infiltration and reduce drought risk. In this way, the bush-biomass industry creates a win-win situation: economic returns today and healthier, more productive rangelands for the future.”

But Volkmann says it is not always easy to get the message across. “The fact remains that the national markets in Europe are declining. Nevertheless, we are still gaining more market share. It demonstrates how attractive we are as producers,” he says.

A leading industry player, who prefers to remain anonymous, confirms that some of Namibia’s competitors in the world market such as Paraguay and Poland, have lost ground due to certification problems in recent years: “to the extent that I have one major supplier based in Paraguay as a client who now buys from Namibia to serve the UK market, because of the increasingly stringent certification framework”.

Volkmann says supplying to lucrative markets such as Norway demands higher product quality, but on the downside it remains strictly seasonal. “The charcoal must be dry, well-packaged, correctly sized and contain no excessive fines [small particles or a fine-grained powder

of charcoal]. I would also prefer that charcoal producers target higher-value markets instead of just providing large volumes at low prices.”

Von Hacht and Volkmann do not expect the resource to be depleted within the next three decades, and available data supports this. The regrowth of woody biomass is estimated at more than 10 million tonnes annually. At present, only 2 million tonnes of biomass are removed each year, mainly for charcoal and firewood. “When it comes to black gold, unlike with mining, the resource can be ‘mined’ multiple times due to regrowth,” Volkmann says.

Strydom says responsible charcoal production in Namibia is widely considered environmentally sustainable. “Many Namibian producers are FSC-certified, assuring international buyers of social and environmental compliance. However, charcoal production is not without downsides.” When woody biomass is turned into charcoal, the process permanently removes nutrients and minerals such as potassium, calcium and magnesium from the local ecosystem, he says. Over decades, the large-scale export of these nutrients in the form of charcoal could contribute to the slow depletion of soil fertility.

“Additionally, Namibia’s charcoal is primarily exported to European and Middle Eastern markets. Transporting bulk charcoal over thousands of kilometres generates significant greenhouse-gas emissions, which partly offset the climate benefits of bush control,” Strydom says. He says proper and holistic planning remains crucial. ❖

This article was first published in the Financial Mail in September.

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WHERE LUXURY MEETS LEGACY

The modern traveller has awakened to a profound truth: every journey leaves a mark and increasingly, they want that mark to be a positive one. Recent research* reveals that 84% of global travellers now consider sustainable travel important, with 93% actively seeking to make more responsible choices. This shift represents a trend and a fundamental re-imagining of what meaningful travel looks like in 2025 and the foreseeable future.



Today's conscious travellers are no longer content with simply visiting destinations. They seek to contribute to their preservation and prosperity. With 53% now aware of tourism's impact on local communities and 69% wanting to leave places better than they found them, the demand for authentic, sustainable experiences has never been greater. This evolution reflects a deeper understanding that true luxury does not lie in excess, but in experiences that honour the environment and the communities that make travel possible.

The relationship between traveller and destination has transformed into a partnership of mutual responsibility and respect. Conscious visitors understand that their choices - where they stay, what they consume, how they engage - directly influence the places they cherish. Meanwhile, forward-thinking destinations recognise that sustainability is about conservation as well as the creation of experiences so authentic and enriching that they inspire visitors to become advocates for preservation.

This symbiotic relationship requires destinations that minimise harm and actively contribute to environmental and community wellbeing. It demands properties that understand luxury isn't diminished by responsibility but rather enhanced by it.



MOKUTI'S SUSTAINABLE SYMPHONY

At Mokuti, this philosophy comes alive through a carefully orchestrated approach to sustainable luxury. Here, environmental stewardship and exceptional hospitality are paired in perfect harmony, creating experiences that resonate long after guests have departed.

Mokuti's commitment begins with its impressive solar plant - a sophisticated single-axis tracked ground-mounted system that harnesses Namibia's abundant sunshine. During daylight hours, this engineering marvel reduces reliance on grid electricity, whilst two strategically placed string inverters ensure maximum efficiency and reliability. This technology works silently in the background, allowing guests to enjoy uninterrupted comfort whilst knowing their stay treads lightly on the earth.

As evening approaches, LED pathway lights equipped with automatic sensors illuminate the grounds, switching on only after sunset. These intelligent systems exemplify Mokuti's thoughtful approach - providing safety and ambience whilst significantly reducing energy consumption. Every gentle glow represents a conscious choice to preserve the pristine darkness that makes Etosha's stars shine so brilliantly.



Perhaps most remarkable is the embrace of spekboom (Portulacaria afra), a remarkable indigenous plant that serves as nature's own carbon capture system. These hardy succulents, thriving throughout the lodge grounds, can absorb between four to ten tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare annually. Through their unique CAM photosynthesis process, spekboom plants store carbon dioxide at night and process it during the day, making them extraordinarily efficient oxygen producers, even in arid conditions.

What makes this initiative truly special is its integration into the guest experience—spekboom garnishes enhance dishes in Mokuti's restaurant, allowing visitors to literally taste the lodge's commitment to sustainability while supporting local biodiversity.

The earthworm farm exemplifies the beauty of circular systems. In carefully designed enclosures, earthworms transform organic matter into nutrient-rich liquid fertiliser, which then nourishes the lodge's gardens. This living system demonstrates how waste can become resource, creating a self-sustaining cycle that enriches rather than depletes.

Similarly, the composting programme transforms fallen leaves and eggshells into rich soil amendments. What might elsewhere be considered waste becomes the foundation for thriving gardens that enhance the property's beauty and its ecological value.

Mokuti's commitment extends beyond its boundaries through comprehensive recycling programmes. Kitchen staff separates waste streams, while the garden team ensures proper



processing before collection by certified waste management partners. This meticulous attention to detail ensures that nothing goes to landfill unnecessarily, protecting the immediate environment and the greater Etosha ecosystem that makes this destination so special.

At Mokuti Etosha authenticity meets aspiration. Every comfort is considered and every pleasure is purposeful. Here, guests don't sacrifice luxury for conscience. Instead, they discover that the deepest satisfaction comes from experiences that honour the natural world while providing exceptional comfort and service.

At Mokuti, sustainability is an integral part of the experience they'll treasure. Caring for the environment enhances rather than diminishes luxury, creating memories rooted in purpose and preserved through responsibility.

For the conscious traveller of 2025 and beyond, Mokuti represents the future of hospitality. One where luxury, authenticity and environmental stewardship unite to create something truly extraordinary.

(* Desk top research and Booking.com's 2025 Travel & Sustainability Report)



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A herd of elephants in Namibia's spectacular Kunene region
photographed on a CSN safari. Pic by Gordon Jackson.



MINDSCAPES: **Beyond Parks:** The Woman Who Helped Human and Non- Human animals go further

*Anthropologist Margaret
Jacobsohn reflects on
the art of building trust
and raising the next
generation of guardians in
Namibia's community-led
conservation*

words by Linda de Jager | photographs supplied

‘Not all tourists are the same. Some people greet you; they tell you their name and ask yours . . . such tourists are like visitors; there is time to see their faces and hear their voices. But in the case of others, even though they may give you food and things, you don’t see their eyes; only the eyes of their cameras.’ – Vengape Tjipomba, Puros, Namibia.

From left to right: Vengape, Katondoihe, MJ, Kata, and Zahavara at Puros. Pic by Denyse Faulkner.



Namibian conservationist, writer and anthropologist Margaret Jacobsohn reflects on four decades of community-based conservation, her life’s work, and ongoing projects supporting rural communities and wildlife.

For 40 years she has helped pioneer an African approach to conservation, co-founding and co-directing the NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), which broke ground in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Her field-driven career, extensive writing, and sustained work with rural partners have earned international recognition and several conservation awards. Her memoir, *Life is Like a Kudu Horn*, appeared in 2019; another book is in the pipeline.

The South African-born researcher began as a journalist in

Cape Town and later lived in the remote Ovahimba settlement of Puros, an experience that reshaped her understanding of people and their relationship with nature.

How do you spend your days?

Besides CBNRM consultancy work, I help run a small company, Conservancy Safaris Namibia (CSN), offering safaris led by Ovahimba guides, and managing a remote lodge in Kunene. I hold the company in trust for the five most north-westerly communal Ovahimba conservancies.

CSN functions more as a social and conservation initiative than a commercial enterprise. We channel significant revenue to the conservancy where the lodge is located, and this has become a main source of income for local people. We also support conservancy game guards and

Hon. Indileni Daniel, the new Minister of Environment and Tourism, at the 2025 Goscar's ceremony with this year's winners; the three Goscars panelists, Hon. Beaven Munali, Dr Margaret Jacobsohn and Mr Ronnie Dempers, plus far right, MET's Deputy Executive Director for Natural Resources Management Colgar Sikopo. Pic by Gail Thomson.



plan to expand as resources allow.

After years of drought, good rains have brought a wildlife baby boom, and game guards asked for help to protect that recovery. We've also invested in the local school and run a monthly food scheme so its children receive one proper meal a day.

Many Ovahimba call the company 'Okamutenge' - the small bag at the end of a trekking stick. It's a name for something that helps people go further.

What is the most important thing you've learnt from engaging with these communities?

Relationships rest on trust and respect. Establish that foundation, whether with a journalist, an official, or a community, that's where joint action begins.

A line from the late Garth Owen-Smith, father of Namibian community-based conservation and my life partner, still guides me. Asked for the best tool for community work, he said: "My ears." It's been a personal mantra: listen more than you speak (not that I always do!)

Tell me about your consultancy work and hobbies.

My work extends beyond Namibia. I support NGOs

across Africa involved in community-based natural resource management, reviewing and editing strategies, identifying gaps, and streamlining copy. I love language in all its forms: writing, editing and reading. Nature, horses and dogs, yoga, and books keep me sane in a world that often feels adrift.

How did you end up in Namibia?

I came in the early '80s to pursue honours and then a doctorate in anthropology and archaeology through the University of Cape Town - and never left.

Did you spend much time outdoors as a child?

I grew up in Pretoria and often visited the Transkei. My father loved fishing; I fished and hiked with my family and played with Xhosa children there, learning a little of the language. I became fiercely anti-apartheid, and deeply attached to nature.

As a young activist I once spoke with an ANC radical who told me: "Don't talk to me about wildlife when my people need land." Those words stayed with me. In Namibia I met Garth, who showed that wildlife can hold value for people,

creating income and jobs. We found a complete meeting of minds and ended up working together for 36 years.

How did the Grassroots Owen-Smith Conservation Awards (Goscars) come about? You initiated it, right?

Yes. When Garth died of cancer during the Covid-19 lockdown in April 2020, support flowed from all quarters, honouring his contribution to African conservation.

Some colleagues suggested a large memorial, but I wanted a living one. So we created the Goscars to annually acknowledge excellence among grassroots conservation workers - many of them passionate volunteers who are rarely paid. This incredible celebration makes my heart sing every April.

You have, through your work, contributed to feminism over the years. How has your perspective on women's roles evolved?

We should raise girls to be tough and self-reliant - not reliant on government or patriarchy for protection. I also respect Namibia's first woman president, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, a former environment and tourism minister who engaged with our work and is known as a committed reader. Leaders who read widely understand the world better.

How do you define community?

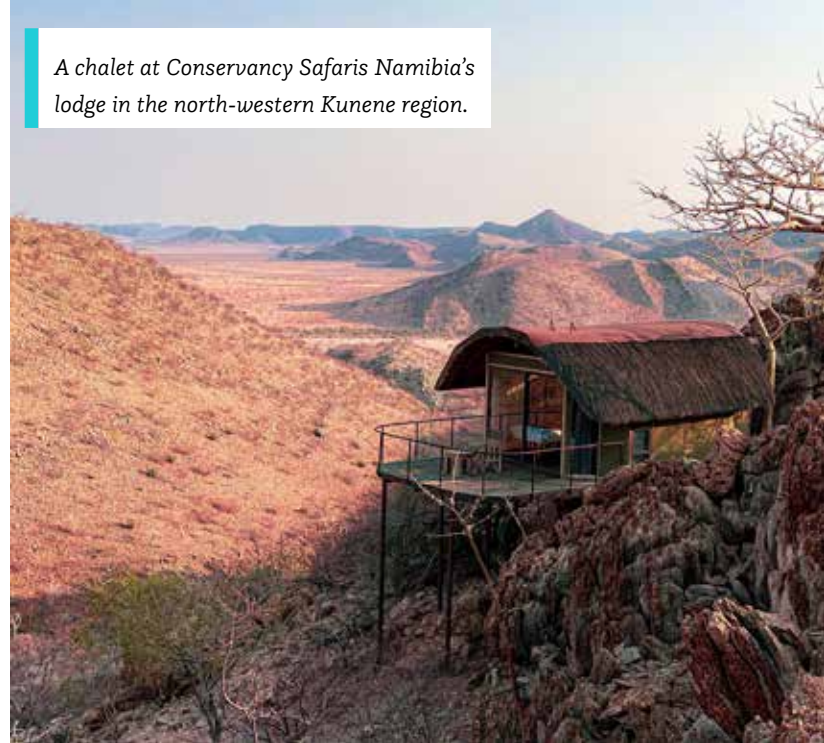
A community is simply a group of people who share aims and/or resources. When I visit Puros, I always stop to see Vengape and Kata Tjipomba - two sisters I spent a lot of time with while doing my PhD. We're older now, but the connection holds. Vengape's son Katondoihe, once fourteen, is now grey-haired with grandchildren. More than forty years on, I'm still part of that extended community. What a privilege.

In too many countries we've lost our sense of community; in recent decades, individual rights have often eclipsed community rights. I'm grateful to live in a country with a small enough population to be able to make a difference.

Namibia's poverty levels are disturbing. What are your thoughts on this?

It's no secret that government has not shared benefits fairly, and some have grown dubiously wealthy. I say that with humility. Yet Namibia has achieved something vital: rural communities hold rights to wildlife and tourism, not

A chalet at Conservancy Safaris Namibia's lodge in the north-western Kunene region.



just elites. In many countries after independence, powerful groups captured valuable resources; here, community-based conservation, championed by founding president Sam Nujoma, set a different path, one we can all be proud of.

After independence we consulted widely with communities living with wildlife. That process helped propel 1996 communal conservancy legislation, which remains a cornerstone of Namibia's approach.

Tell us about the next book.

Where Are We Now? looks at the Ovahimba forty years on - what's new and what endures. Some chapters are by Himba friends and colleagues, young and old; some sections are recorded and transcribed for contributors who are not fully literate.

What is the contribution you want to make as an 'elder'?

I hope to leave the world slightly better, especially for non-human species. I love animals. Although I've worked with people all my life, my heart is with the more-than-human world. ❖



Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika!

*A love letter to Africa's earth,
music, and everyday grace*

words and photographs supplied by Susann Kinghorn

In November 2008, Zimbabwe's inflation hit 79.6 billion percent per month – a Z\$100 trillion note was so worthless it could barely buy a loaf of bread.



The weeping violin of the Soweto String Quartet is creeping deep under my skin, drawing from the maze of my thoughts a jumble of emotional answers to the question of why, despite many frustrations, I love living in Africa so much — specifically in Namibia, and certainly not in any war-torn African country — and would not, even in my wildest dreams, think of exchanging this continent for another.

Please excuse me for getting sentimental now by praying to my seemingly endless happy place:

“Mama Africa, primal mother of all my desire and passion, I throw myself upon your big, inviting breast anew every day. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to wallow like a warthog in the dust of your Kingdom of parched, needy Earth and therefore of refreshing inventiveness — where the meat for the evening grill on an open fire pit is sometimes transported from far on a cyclist’s back in the form of a bleating goat, and where the children, in the scorching heat, create a swimming pool out of a dustbin in no time.

Ti/namsaro (my beloved), I dance the Omupembe and Ndilimani dances for you and with you every day, which the Ovambo people in Namibia perform at the birth of a child, because here on your stony, rough surface I am reborn every day.

And everything around you is familiar every single morning when the sun rises, and yet as new as the fresh smell of the fields after the welcome rain.

Africa, *eyimbilo 'yandje* (“my song”), which I can get intoxicated with day after day, since your music is a fundamental part of my daily life, connecting me with Earth’s energy, grounding and centering me, and at the same time allowing me to sense your fascinating vastness and infinity.”

When, in rare moments, I exchange your robust yet yielding terra firma for the cobblestones of Europe and no longer feel your reassuring sandpaper on the soles of my feet, and cannot let my hands glide over your rough rocks, I immediately feel the longing for you, which expresses itself in the wish: “Ti mamasa ta ge” (I want to see my mother again). Feel her!

My beloved Africa, where you can enjoy a gentle snore in the shade of a shepherd’s tree without having to pay for yoga or autogenic training classes in some concrete jungle; where you still have the luxury of not needing a meditation instructor for simply relaxing and thinking of nothing... and where one can, for precious moments, merely exist!

Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika (God, preserve Africa!), so that we can continue to experience human kindness and live spontaneously for a long time to come. So that we can still associate the cow with the milk and not forget the smell of Mother Earth.

I am yours forever!

Amen

Susann Kinghorn ❁

The Last Word

words by Chris Coetzee



Human behaviour - and the brain itself - are endlessly fascinating.

Psychologists tell us the average adult makes around 35,000 decisions each day. Most pass unnoticed. That said, a fair number are questionable, because the human brain — marvellous though it is — relies on shortcuts. These “heuristics” are quick, but not always wise.

I grew up in a family of five boys. My parents, already blessed with three sons, made one final attempt for a daughter. What they received instead was my twin brother and me...

In philosophical terms, this is called a qualitative leap — a profound, non-cumulative break from sequential logic, as Kierkegaard described, or a “leap in being,” in Voegelin’s sense: a shift from an empirical order to a new understanding of truth.

My father still recalls that day with crystal clarity.

Over the years, I’ve found that questionable decisions fall neatly into three categories:

First, there’s the classic: “What on earth were you thinking?” — almost always accompanied by a sigh and a look of disappointment.

Then there’s the rarer, almost miraculous one: “I can’t believe that actually worked.”

And finally, my personal favourite, borrowed with gratitude from my brother: the “Stand back, smile, and be thankful she’s not yours” category.

It is, perhaps, memory that allows such questionable choices to endure. Research shows that within an hour we forget nearly half of all new information — a fact that surely explains how my parents survived five boys. Either that, or it was the amygdala calling the shots while the prefrontal

cortex abdicated its responsibilities (emotion versus logic).

Then there’s the question of reward. Neuroscience confirms that buying something new triggers a shot of dopamine, that sweet little chemical of fleeting happiness. Which perfectly explains why two of my otherwise intelligent brothers own multiple Land Rovers, despite their reliability issues, as documented (and confirmed) by countless invoices.

And should you, by chance, have spare parts to sell, one of them is almost guaranteed to buy.

And with that, let me shift to this month’s Michelangelo Magazine-approved destination.

The Fish River Canyon defies simple description. Africa’s largest canyon, its scale boggles the mind like big families, impressive on paper, but best understood when you’re standing quietly at the edge. Scientists estimate its volume at nearly 800 cubic kilometers — enough to swallow the Great Wall of China more than 800 times over, with space still left unclaimed. It rests on the border of the Namib, the world’s oldest desert — a striking irony for something that is the love child of water and wind.

And yet, when you stand at its rim, reason slips away. How could a river of such force disappear? Why would the earth leave this vast hollow exposed, both desolate and magnificent? Perhaps it is nature’s way of reminding us that not every “why” has an answer. Some things endure not because they are explained, but because they are meant to be witnessed.

The Fish River Canyon remains just that: beyond measure, beyond reason, and beyond words. As Eric Voegelin reminds us, it is where we move beyond facts alone and awaken to a deeper truth. ❖



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