

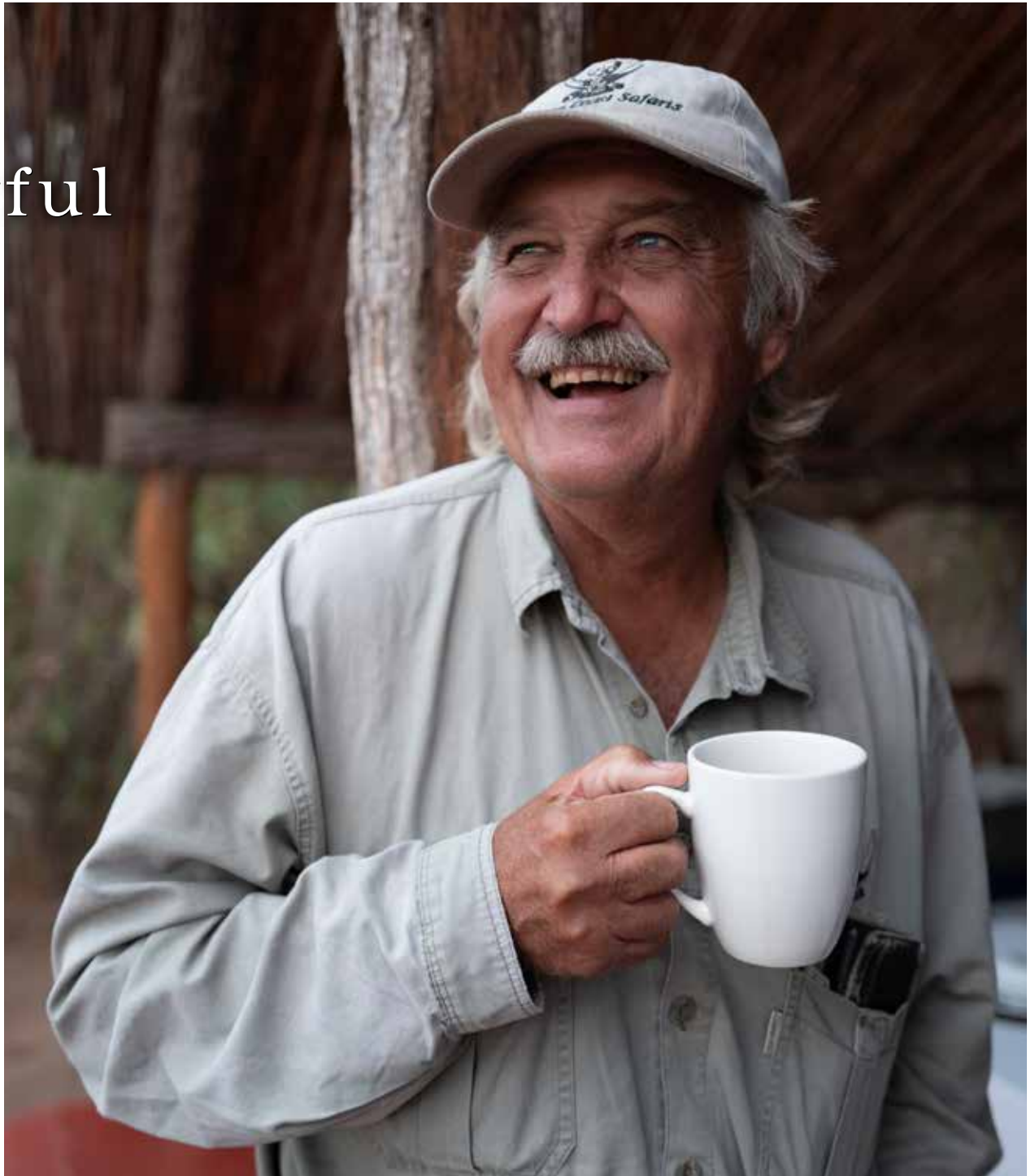
Michelangelo

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Her Excellency Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
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The Year That Was

*A year of democratic voices,
shared journeys and renewed
hope as Namibia steps into the
festive season*

“Our national story is extraordinary, and it grows richer when told from every Namibian’s perspective.”

Democracy is alive in Namibia. This year, as Namibians, our voices have been heard. We may hold different views, yet each voice has found space in our democratic discourse. This is the Namibia I hoped for when we returned from exile in 1989. The Namibia we dreamed of as we prepared to take over the administration of our country, believing that all its people would prosper in their noble pursuits.

We continue to celebrate national achievements, one after another, demonstrating excellence across various fields. In sports, our spirits have been renewed. The ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 will showcase the finest up-and-coming talent from the participating sides, and will be played from 15 January to 6 February in 2026. This momentum affirms the urgent need to strengthen the support systems that sustain athletic success. One remarkable quality about us as Namibians is that when we believe in something, we rally together. The private sector has stepped forward to invest in world-class sports infrastructure; a crucial step in advancing my vision of a Namibia where young people productively use their talents to drive national development.

As we enter the festive season, I encourage you to explore our holiday destinations and enjoy time with your loved ones. Throughout the year, we have welcomed visitors from all over the world as we expand our MICE industry, and we look forward to receiving them again as they return for more of the Namibian experience.

We are ready to celebrate this season together. As your Commander-in-Chief, I expect a safe and joyful festive period for all as we enjoy the serenity of Namibia's open skies

and vast, peaceful landscapes. These moments remind me of my childhood in Onamutai Village, where we watched the moon shine through clear skies and listened to timeless Namibian folklore.

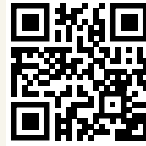
Our national story is extraordinary, and it grows richer when told from every Namibian's perspective. This is the beauty of our democracy and the freedoms it guarantees. These stories come alive in family gatherings. I encourage you to make time for your families, strengthen your bonds, and nurture relationships, for healthy families build a loving and united nation. Visit one another, exchange gifts, and uplift each other.

The recent regional and local authority elections reaffirmed that every voice matters. I look forward to the work we will do together with local authorities, who remain closest to the daily lives of our people and our esteemed visitors.

As you celebrate this festive season, remember that your leadership is with you every step of the way. Democracy allows us to live authentically and achieve our ambitions — the ambitions that brought me here today as your President. I am inspired by the determination of our young people, who continue to show that what once seemed unattainable is now within reach. The barriers that once hindered progress are being dismantled.

While this is a time of celebration, it is also a moment for reflection. As your Head of State, I will continue to listen; your dreams are valid, and Namibia stands ready to support you in pursuing them, so that one day you may enjoy the abundant fruits of your efforts.

For now, make the most of this season. ❖



Turning Janu-Worry into Janu-Wise: Borrow with Purpose

Natasha Winkler

Natasha Winkler

Managing Director

Old Mutual Namibia Finance



December is a time of celebration, a season filled with twinkling lights, delicious meals, and family gatherings. For many of us, it's the best time of the year. But as the new year rolls around, the result of the holiday spending catches up with us with a bang. For many Namibians, January isn't just the start of a new year; it's the start of "Janu-worry." It's that stressful feeling when the bills come in, and you're left wondering how to make ends meet after overspending during the festive season.

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of the holidays and stretch the budget a little too far. The good news is that you're not alone. We all want to enjoy the holidays, but it's important to be mindful of the financial consequences that can follow. The truth is, overspending is a common problem, and it's something many people face as they look to start the new year. But there are ways to avoid the post-holiday financial blues, and borrowing can be part of the solution, if you use it wisely.

At first glance, borrowing money might seem like the obvious answer to getting through a tough month. But it's important to remember that borrowing isn't inherently bad. In fact, borrowing with a purpose can be a smart tool to help you achieve your long-term goals. The key lies in the reason behind the borrowing.

When you take out a loan for the right reasons, including long-term home improvements, debt consolidation, or education, you are investing in your future. You can improve your financial foundation with the help of these loans, which will ultimately make your life easier. But borrowing money for non-essential things, like buying items you don't really need or covering holiday bills, can quickly lead to a stressful and debt-filled cycle. Consumptive lending is the term used to describe this kind of borrowing for goods that have no long-term worth.

At Old Mutual, we are committed to promoting

responsible borrowing. We provide personal loan options designed to help you and your employees manage life's challenges in a sustainable way, without compromising your financial well-being.

So how do we avoid falling into the trap of Janu-worry and borrowing the wrong way? Here are three practical steps to help you borrow wisely and start the year with confidence:

- **Create a Budget and Stick to It:** Although the holidays can be tempting, it's important to set up a reasonable budget before the festivities start. Avoid utilising your January pay cheque to pay for December's expenses.
- **Take out a loan for long-term benefits rather than fleeting pleasures:** Consider how you can use the money you need to borrow to better your future. Loans for things like remodelling your house or continuing your education might be wise investments.
- **Consolidate Debt When Necessary:** You can get more control over your money by combining all of your debts into a single, manageable loan. This method can help you pay off your debt more quickly and lessen the burden of managing multiple payments.

Ultimately, the secret to preventing Janu-worry is balance. Enjoy the holidays but make an effort to avoid accruing debt. Make sure you have a clear objective in mind if borrowing is necessary. You may turn Janu-worry into Janu-wise and start the new year with a sense of financial stability by making wise financial decisions one at a time.

For now, enjoy the month of December and this festive season. Travel safely, make memories, and enjoy this month's read. ❖



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(See pages 20-23 for the full story)

www.skeletoncoastsafaris.com

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



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Into the Desert: Herping Namibia

*Trade the Big Five for small wonders – adders, geckos and
chameleons under Namibia's desert skies*

edited by Anne Schauffer | photograph by Dayne Braine and Sean Braine



A herping safari? For sure. It comes from the word herpetology, the study of reptiles and amphibians. This safari focuses on finding snakes, lizards, geckos, frogs, and toads in their natural habitats. Namibia, with its vast deserts and unique ecosystems, is one of the best places for such an adventure.

It's not everybody's idea of a safari, but if you're fascinated by creatures of the night, finding some of Namibia's legendary *Bitis* adders, or getting down and dirty with geckos... you need to go herping with the experts. You're going to work extremely hard and long hours, but the rewards for the devoted are big. The Naturalist Collection sketched some highlights of a recent herping trip, one of them being the rare sighting of all six of Namibia's *Bitis* adders.

A group of enthusiasts, guided by an expert guide, set out across more than four thousand kilometres of Namibian wilderness in search of its hidden herpetofauna. It was no gentle holiday. The journey was intense: long hours on the road;

early mornings spent scanning reptiles and photographing; nights filled with hours of walking and slow road-cruising under desert skies. The reward was extraordinary — over sixty-five species recorded, including all six of Namibia's *Bitis* adders, a feat few herpetologists can claim.

The dunes revealed the first treasures. By day, faint tracks in the sand told of nocturnal insects and reptiles from the night before, as well as the unique side-winding tracks of the endemic Peringuey's adder (*Bitis peringueyi*) — these reptiles glide effortlessly across the soft sand before burying themselves, using a pendulum-like movement that leaves only the eyes exposed. Nearby, burrows of the Namib web-footed gecko (*Pachydactylus rangei*) were observed — being nocturnal, these geckos are sensitive to sunlight; however, with care and professional knowledge, they may be uncovered to show their extraordinary webbed feet and translucent skin. At night, these unique geckos fluoresce under UV light.



The gravel plains uncovered reticulated sand lizards (*Merolles reticulatus*) on the run, while the slip-faces of nearby dunes saw the endemic Namib sand-diving lizards (*Merolles anchietae*) sprinting up the dunes before diving headfirst into the soft sand.

Moving eastward away from the Atlantic, the landscapes changed — and so did the species.

On gravel plains, horned adders (*Bitis caudalis*) lay camouflaged among pebbles, their keeled scales blending perfectly with their surroundings. In the rocky escarpments of the southern region, the desert mountain adder (*Bitis xeropaga*) was tracked down, while farther south, the many-horned adder (*Bitis cornuta*) turned up near coastal scrub. The widespread puff adder (*Bitis arietans*) appeared reliably throughout the country, while the diminutive Namaqua dwarf adder (*Bitis schneideri*), one of the smallest vipers in the world, was a rare delight. To encounter all six of Namibia's

adders in a single journey underscored the country's exceptional diversity, not to mention excellent guidance through the areas covered.

Other snakes added to the excitement: both the Cape cobra (*Naja nivea*) and Western black spitting cobra (*Naja nigricincta woodi*), each commanding respect. A boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*) turned up in woodland habitat, while night walks produced common egg-eaters (*Dasyeltis scabra*) and Cape coral cobra (*Aspidelaps lubricus lubricus*). During the warmth of the day, slender sand snakes were observed, including the Namib sand snake (*Psammophis leightoni namibensis*) and Karoo sand snake (*Psammophis leightoni notostictus*).

At night, geckos seemed to be everywhere. The Namib giant ground gecko (*Chondrodactylus angulifer namibensis*) patrolled sandy flats, while Namib ghost geckos (*Pachydactylus kochii*) occurred on coarse gravel plains. In the quiet of the night, the chorus of common barking geckos (*Ptenopus*



garrulus) echoed through valleys, while along the coastal zone the sister species Carp's barking gecko (*Ptenopus carpi*) was common — each call led to a burrow where they could be seen peeping from their underground refuge. The delicate Namib web-footed gecko (*Pachydactylus rangei*), mentioned earlier, remained one of the most iconic and treasured sightings.

Lizards added their own colour to the tour. Namaqua chameleons (*Chamaeleo namaquensis*) shuffled across roads and shrubs, swivelling their eyes in all directions. On granite outcrops, Karoo girdled lizards (*Karusasaurus polyzonus*) wedged themselves deep into cracks, their spiny scales a perfect defence. Namibian rock agamas (*Agama planiceps*) basked boldly in the sun, the males flashing bright colours against the desert rocks, while spotted desert lizards (*Merole suborbitalis*) darted nervously across open gravel plains.

Beyond the reptiles, Namibia's desert ecology added further depth to the experience. Solifuges dashed across the

sand, scorpions glowed under ultraviolet light, and ancient Welwitschia plants spread their leathery leaves across gravel plains — silent witnesses to millennia of survival.

By the end of the tour, more than sixty-five species had been confirmed. But the numbers tell only part of the story. Each discovery brought a sense of wonder. For the participants, it was not just about seeing reptiles, but about entering a hidden world that few travellers ever experience.

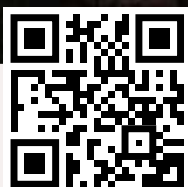
A herping safari in Namibia is demanding. It requires patience, stamina, and a willingness to walk for hours in both blistering heat and cool desert nights. Yet for those who venture into this realm, the rewards are immense. This is a safari where the “big finds” are not elephants or lions, but adders, geckos, and chameleons — creatures that reveal an entirely different side of Namibia, one just as wild and unforgettable. ❖

19 O&L 19

LEISURE

MOKUTI ETOSHA

Scan to read later!



ELEVATION AND
RE-IMAGINATION

IN THE NAMIBIAN WILDERNESS

In the heart of Etosha's timeless landscape, Mokuti Etosha has unveiled something extraordinary: SkyBoma, an elevated dining experience that literally and metaphorically raises the bar for African safari hospitality. Fully operational from October 2025, this innovative concept is a restaurant and a bold re-imagining of what a bush dinner can be.

The original spark came from observing Namibia's natural ecosystem and the ingenious ways meerkats use anthills as vantage points to broaden and elevate their views—both to ward off danger and in search of possible opportunities. This observation became the perfect metaphor for Mokuti's vision. SkyBoma gives guests an elevated, re-imagined perspective of Namibia's beautiful land and wondrous star-filled skies, bringing to life O&L Leisure's promise of experiencing "Namibia Through Our Eyes."



This unique positioning sets Mokuti apart in a region renowned for safari experiences. While traditional bush dinners remain grounded, SkyBoma elevates the concept, quite literally, creating Southern Africa's first elevated bush dining destination. It's a distinctive offering that positions Mokuti as an innovator, blending timeless African hospitality with contemporary luxury and imagination. This innovative spirit has already captured global attention as the property was recently highlighted in Condé Nast's prestigious "Best Places to Go in Africa" round-up for 2026.



Operating an elevated restaurant in the African bush presents unique complexities. Safety protocols are paramount—from secure pathways and proper lighting to weather monitoring systems. Guest briefings cover everything from appropriate footwear to photography etiquette around wildlife. Housekeeping teams maintain pristine standards while working at height and all staff undergo specialised training for the unique operational environment. Club car services stand ready for guests with mobility considerations, ensuring accessibility without compromising the intimate experience.



ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL INSPIRED BY NATURE

Every element of SkyBoma's design tells a story deeply rooted in Namibia's natural ecosystem. The structure itself draws inspiration from termite hills that dot the Etosha landscape, while the lightweight canvas roof copies the delicate form of Omayova mushrooms, those extraordinary termite-hill mushrooms that emerge after good rains, representing nature's remarkable symbiosis. Even the balustrade pays homage to the traditional kraal, the protective enclosures found in Namibian villages.

The pathway ascending to SkyBoma is poetically named "Stairway to Heaven" and, from above, forms an infinity symbol—representing Namibia's endless horizons and timeless beauty. This is an experience where architecture, landscape and cultural meaning come together.



A GASTRONOMIC CELEBRATION OF NAMIBIAN HERITAGE

At SkyBoma's heart lies an untold story: Namibia produces some of the world's finest beef and venison. As one of the top ten beef exporters to the European Union, Namibia's grass-fed, free-roaming cattle and game create meat of exceptional quality, flavour and juiciness. SkyBoma was conceived specifically to also showcase this heritage.

The dining experience unfolds in carefully orchestrated stages. Upon arrival, guests receive welcome drinks in signature Omayova-inspired cups, celebrating the iconic mushrooms in their early, closed stage—a metaphor for the experience about to unfold. During sundowner, a "flying buffet" presents five to six small tasting dishes, opening the palate with contemporary interpretations of traditional flavours. The menu features innovative creations like mini seared chipotle game tacos, Parmesan tuile crisps with beef biltong pâté and even Mopane worm tastings—the protein-rich caterpillar that's been a Namibian delicacy for generations.



As darkness falls and stars emerge, the buffet-style main experience begins. Guests explore dishes at their own rhythm: Springbok loin with tamarind rub, coronated Cape Malay lamb chops caramelised over open flames, Mozambique peri-peri chokka seared on fire and oxtail potjie. Desserts include Amarula honey ice cream and fire-baked orange fondant with rooibos custard anglaise—each dish kissed by fire and celebrating Namibia's culinary heritage, re-imagined.

Once elevated eight metres above the bush, panoramic views of the Etosha Pan unfold. As twilight deepens, the SkyBoma transforms into a celestial amphitheatre. Binoculars are available for stargazing and wildlife spotting at the waterhole below, where the Milky Way's shimmering rivers stretch overhead and nocturnal Africa awakens.

This is dining as destination, elevation as metaphor and cuisine as cultural storytelling—all under Namibia's endless skies.

SkyBoma is available exclusively to Mokuti Etosha guests.

Bookings: sales@ol.na | Reservations: Mokuti.Res@ol.na

Scan to book now!



THE JOURNEY TO THE SKY

The SkyBoma experience begins well before the first course. Guests meet at reception 45 minutes before sunset, where they're introduced to our Bushman guide from the Hai||Om people—one of Namibia's indigenous communities with extraordinary knowledge of the land—and a Golden Ambassador who will guide them through the evening's stories.

The guided walk to SkyBoma is itself an immersive experience. At the termite hill, guests learn how the queen lays up to 30,000 eggs daily and how termites farm fungus to digest wood—the same process that eventually produces the Omayova mushroom. At the Marula tree, stories unfold about elephants feasting on fermented fruit and the tradition of Amarula liqueur. By the time guests reach SkyBoma's base, they witness a fire-making ritual—an age-old tradition connecting them to countless generations of African gatherings.





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The Skeleton Coast:

An Adventure by Air and Land

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

*Low flight paths, quiet camps,
and the stark beauty of a
protected coastline*



Your adventure begins at Eros Airport in Windhoek, where Skeleton Coast Safaris welcomes you with scenic flights over some of Africa's most ancient wilderness. Experience the thrill of landing in remote locations - often inaccessible to most travellers - then continue your exploration of the rugged coast and its interior by Land Rover or on foot.

You'll stay at exclusive, privately owned tented camps, each hand-picked for its stunning surroundings. Enjoy spacious tents with en-suite bucket showers, where every detail - from bedding and towels to torches and fresh, delicious meals - has been mindfully curated and provided. Expect fresh fruits and vegetables, soft drinks, and a fine selection of beers and wines ensuring your comfort throughout your stay.

For photography enthusiasts, this region is paradise. You'll move between captivating sights in Skeleton

Coast Safaris' aircraft and safari vehicles, flying low for breathtaking aerial views before landing to explore on the ground. Highlights include the haunting, desolate coastline flanked by roaring dunes; the remarkable Ugab rock formations; the reds and yellows of the Huab Valley; ancient Bushman rock engravings; the living fossil *Welwitschia mirabilis*; and opportunities to meet the nomadic Himba people. Panoramic vistas of the Hartmann Valley, extending to the Kunene River along the Angolan border, are simply unforgettable.

One of the most enchanting aspects of this safari is the aerial introduction to the Namib Desert and its coastline. While game spotting can be a delightful bonus, the focus is to immerse yourself in the unspoiled beauty and serene solitude of this extraordinary landscape.



Who are Skeleton Coast Safaris?

The Schoeman family's legacy is deeply intertwined with the creation of the Skeleton Coast National Park. Founded by Louw Schoeman, this family-run company continues to offer travellers a unique combination of air and land exploration, revealing shipwrecks, rolling sand dunes, and the stark beauty of this coastline. Simply put, there is nothing else like it.

When Louw officially established Skeleton Coast Safaris in 1977, his children—teenagers then—often accompanied him. They learned to appreciate the desert's complexities and gained practical skills for navigating roaring dunes while introducing the wonders of this magnificent landscape to newcomers.

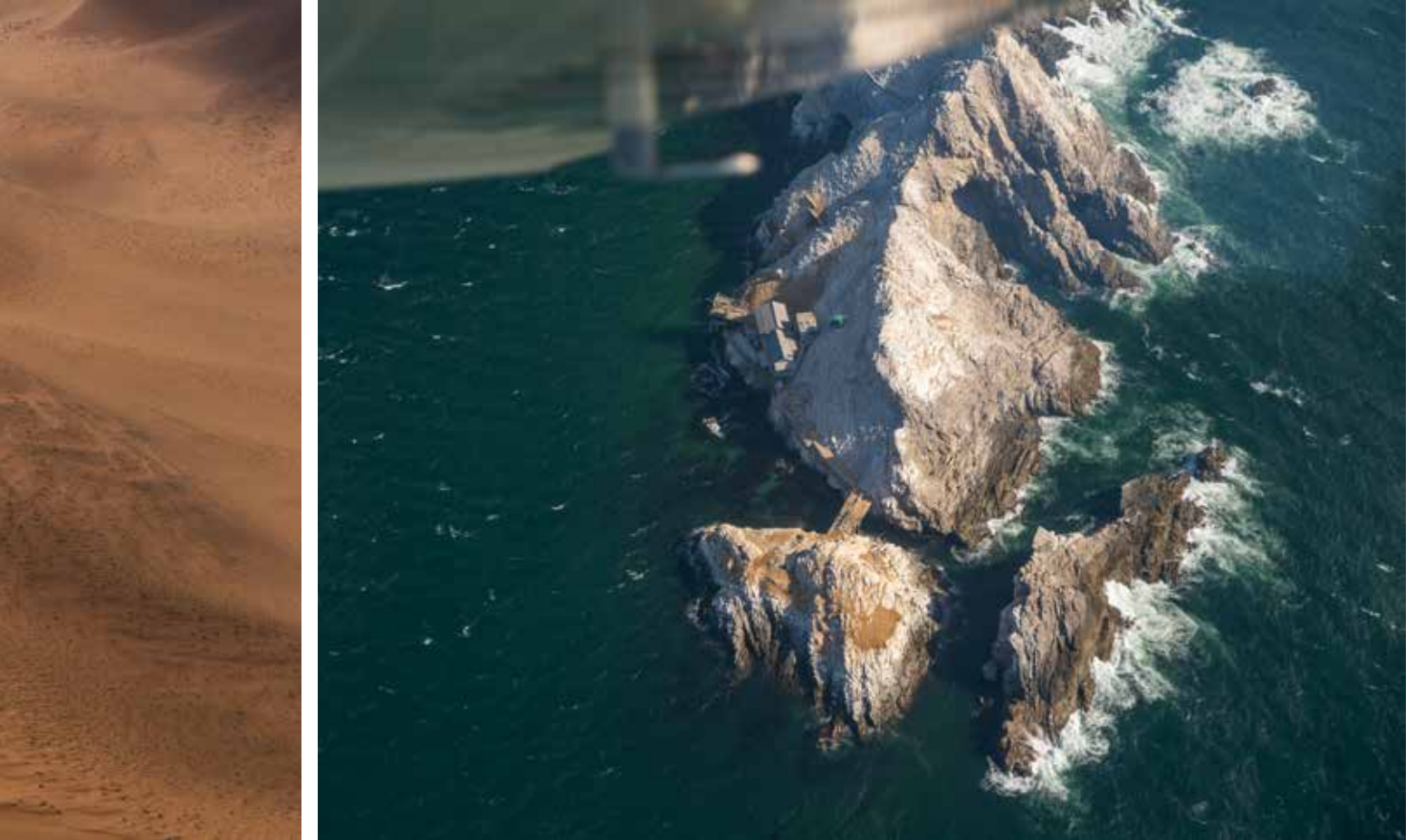
In 1993, the Schoeman children took over management of the company, carrying forward their father's passion for the desert. Today, they are recognised as experts on the

Skeleton Coast and its semi-desert regions, continuing a pioneering legacy in ecotourism. They believe Namibia's future relies not only on tourism and wildlife preservation, but also on protecting the country's natural resources and wilderness areas. The scarcity of resources—and his goal to preserve the environment—led Louw to introduce eco-tourism here.

Raised in this extraordinary land, the Schoemans have the secrets of the Skeleton Coast etched into their souls. Every visitor benefits from their extensive knowledge and love for the coast.

Each safari is typically guided by a member of the Schoeman family, serving as pilot, driver, and expert guide. Nights are spent in different locations at intimate permanent camps - **Kuidas Camp** beside the dry Huab River, **Leylandsdrift Camp** overlooking a spring in the Hoarusib River, and **Kunene River Camp** along the lush

Jingle Bells wasn't meant for Christmas. It was written in 1857 by James Lord Pierpont and originally called "One Horse Open Sleigh" – meant for Thanksgiving.



banks of the Kunene — offering a distinctive, comfortable “glamping” experience.

The Schoemans’ commitment extends beyond family; they have built lasting relationships with local communities who’ve worked alongside them for generations. A notable example is Janson Kasona, part of the Skeleton Coast Safaris family for over 35 years; his father also worked with Louw.

With Namibia’s independence, the land transitioned to state ownership, granting local communities conservancy rights to benefit from land and wildlife while ensuring protection. Collaboration between Skeleton Coast Safaris and local conservancies has flourished, emphasising sustainability for the Park and its hinterland. Everyone employed under the Skeleton Coast Safaris banner hails from these conservancies. The company is also dedicated to the care and contentment of the Himba — a culturally

distinct, semi-nomadic people — and supports five families living inland from the coast.

The Schoemans remain passionate about the Skeleton Coast’s cultures and wilderness. Bertus, Andre, Leon, and Henk carry forward their late father Louw’s legacy, ensuring this exceptional coastline remains sustainable and beautiful for generations to come. Together with Bertus’s spouse, Helga, and children — Michael, Kyle, Cindel, and Yurianke — they continue to preserve this magical place.

A safari with the Schoeman family isn’t like any other. Their depth of knowledge gets you beneath the skin of the Skeleton Coast, its people and, indeed, Namibia itself. You’ll see this world through different eyes. One for the memory bank. 🍷

A SCARLET SURPRISE ON THE ZAMBEZI

A Rare Northern Visitor

Not all moments in the wild are planned. Some arrive like a flash of unimaginable colour when you least expect them. At Gondwana Collection Namibia's Zambezi Mubala Lodge & Camp, perched on the banks of the mighty Zambezi River, one such moment recently broke the rhythm of nature and left everyone breathless.

The news spread quickly: "We came back from the Carmine Bee-eater colony with something special - a Northern Carmine Bee-eater among our Southern friends!"

The lodge's usual congregation of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters is already one of nature's great spectacles. Every year from August to December, thousands of crimson-breasted birds nest in the sandy riverbanks, filling the sky with chatter and colour. But this time, something rare stirred among them.

The Northern Carmine Bee-eater is a "rare vagrant" to this region. Before now, it had graced Southern Africa only twice - once in Bwabwata National Park in 2020, and once in West Limpopo near the Botswana border in 2021 - making this sighting the third on record.

Unexpected Colours on the Zambezi

During CNP Safaris photographic expedition, photographer Neal Cooper made an extraordinary find - a Northern Carmine Bee-eater among the colonies of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters that nest along the Zambezi each year. Though nearly identical, the Northern stands out with its blue-green throat, in contrast to the Southern's carmine hue.

Their ranges almost never overlap, making this sighting exceptionally rare. According to birding expert Trevor Hardaker (Southern African Rare Bird News report, 3 February 2025), previous sightings were brief, with only one bird ever lingering in Namibia near Nunda River Lodge.

When Nature Paints Beyond the Lines

When guests at Zambezi Mubala glimpsed that turquoise throat among the sea of scarlet feathers, time seemed to pause. The river hushed. Even the hum of life along the banks fell quiet. In that instant, nature reminded us of her power to surprise - a quiet defiance of boundaries and expectations.

Zambezi Mubala Lodge & Camp is no ordinary retreat. Located 40 km east of Katima Mulilo, it's a modern, stylish hideaway where river and sky blur into one shimmering horizon. Over 450 bird species have been recorded here, including one of the most vibrant Southern Carmine Bee-eater colonies on the continent. The lodge's very name - Mubala, meaning "colour" in Silozi - captures its essence: colourful cabins, sunlit decks, and sunsets that blush across the Zambezi.

Guests can visit the colony, join sunset cruises, or simply sit along the banks as thousands of bee-eaters swirl overhead, and sometimes, witness a flash of blue among the red.

Why This Matters

The Northern Carmine Bee-eater's (*Merops nubicus*) presence normally stretches from Senegal to Ethiopia. For one to wander this far south is remarkable, a reminder that nature still moves to its own mysterious rhythm. For birdwatchers, photographers, and travellers alike, it's a call to look closer, to seek beauty not just in what's expected, but in what defies prediction.

An Invitation to Witness Wonder

Imagine dawn on the Zambezi: mist rising, fish eagles calling, bee-eaters stirring in their numbers ranging from hundreds to thousands. Then, among the scarlet wings, one flash of turquoise.

At Zambezi Mubala Lodge & Camp, such moments can't be planned - but they happen, here, where the river breathes and colour comes alive. Book your stay and, perhaps, like Neal, you'll witness a story no one expected - a fleeting marvel reminding us that nature always has one more surprise to share.

Text: Jandia van Wyk | Images: Neil Cooper - CNP Safaris | Layout: Geena Visagie





Would you like to visit the Zambezi to catch and glimpse of these little feathered wonders?
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Slice of Life

by Jescey Bekker

Christmas cookies and rowing machines



I LOVE CHRISTMAS. I have always loved Christmas, but once my son was born, I made a vow to make every holiday as memorable and over the top as I possibly could. I want my little boy to look back at his festive memories and think, “Wow, my childhood Christmases could give a Hallmark movie a run for its money...”

Yes, that makes me one of those people who has had my Christmas trees up since mid-November. And yes, I did write trees with an “s” — as in multiple. Don’t worry, there are only two; I had to loan the third one to my sister this year. The Christmas calendar is full of festive experiments and activities: an entire day dedicated to baking cookies (I have an incredible gingerbread recipe), and two additional days for making ornaments and Christmas cards. We also need to play games and drink eggnog (or a frozen variation, because Namibia’s heat is here to stay for Christmas dinner too!).

As I plan all these activities and go shopping for treacle sugar and nutmeg, I can’t help but picture the rowing machine standing in the back room gathering dust... I’m going to need to make use of that thing if I’m going to survive all the Christmas snacks and still fit into my jeans come January.

Christmas, to me, is a remarkably special time of year.

After a long 11 months of work and effort, this season should be fun, light-hearted, and most importantly, filled with family time. Regardless of faith, preferred traditions, or life choices, in my mind this time is (and should be) dedicated to spending time with loved ones. To appreciate all that you have and all the lessons the year has offered — and I’m sure we can all agree that 2025 offered many lessons. In my home, these reflections and family moments happen while decorating cookies (rowing machine, I’m coming for you) and trying to get my toddler to colour at least around the Christmas tree, you know, on the page, not the wall or table or floor.

What this season looks like for you is entirely of your own design. You may have existing family traditions that infuriate you (been there). This year, I challenge you to make them fun: look for the joy and laughter in the moments that would usually disrupt. And when in doubt, take another sip of wine, take a deep breath, and don’t let anyone steal your joy.

Happy Holidays and Merry New Year, dearest Reader. May this festive season bring you the light, laughter and joy you need and deserve!

And if you have any tips on avoiding those Christmas cookie centimetres, let me know! ❖



Pelican Point in a Kayak

*A family-friendly adventure
where seals, dolphins, and
pristine ocean views meet on
Namibia's coast.*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



There can be no finer vantage point to view the sea-life at Pelican Point than seated in a stable kayak, guided by seasoned experts, with seals surrounding you. It's a fabulous family friendly activity in nature.

Paddling is huge fun, even if you've never been inside a kayak before. Ask the Pelican Point Kayaking team. They operate with extremely stable kayaks, so although paddling is a physical activity, you don't need to be fit or have any prior experience or qualifications to join in.

Their kayaks are made of moulded plastic and are sit-inside double kayaks — really steady and safe. You'll be supplied with splash-proof clothing and all the necessary safety equipment.

Pelican Point is home to around 50,000 Cape fur seals, along with Heaviside's and bottlenose dolphins, black-backed jackals, flamingos, pelicans, and even the elusive brown hyena. Humpback whales migrate past between April and October, so if you're keen, plan your trip then.

You'll meet the Pelican Point Kayaking team at their base in Walvis Bay, as they pack the kayaks, equipment and food before heading out to join the seals and dolphins for a relaxing paddle at the tip of the remote Pelican Point peninsula.

Departure in 4x4 vehicles is at 8:00 a.m., with a fascinating 45 km drive to the kayaking site. En route, you'll enjoy the Walvis Bay wetlands, a picture-postcard view teeming with birdlife, notably flamingos, pelicans and cormorants. The salt mine and its bright pink lakes — one of the largest of its kind in the world — are a rare sight. The drive takes about an hour, including those all-important photo stops.

You'll be paddling on the protected side of the bay, surrounded by playful seals. With a bit of luck, you might even rub shoulders with resident Benguela or Heaviside's dolphins.

Pelican Point Kayaking describes the uniqueness of the experience: "When you're on a kayak, you become part of the ocean without disturbing the wildlife. The animals do not see us as a threat in any way, so we have the opportunity to enjoy them without disturbing them."

After about an hour at sea, a wonderful land-based brunch awaits — hearty sandwiches, coffee and tea — before heading back to Walvis Bay to arrive between 12h00 and 12h30.

Pelican Point Kayaking also offers three other experiences:

- **Self-Drive Pelican Point Kayaking (4–4½ hours):** Follow the kayaking guide in your own 4x4. The team doesn't cross any dunes, but the last 10 km allows you to drive along the sandy beaches of Pelican Point before kayaking for about one hour.
- **Kayak & Sandwich Harbour 4x4 Combo (8–9 hours):** A full-day adventure combining the morning Pelican Point Kayaking tour with a scenic 4x4 drive through the breathtaking Sandwich Harbour area of the Namib-Naukluft Park.
- **Pelican Point Seal Safari (3 hours):** An exciting afternoon tour to see the Seals without getting your feet wet but still getting to see all the other wildlife and pink salt lakes. Guided in their 4x4 with a professional guide. ❄️

Dear Diary



Christmas in Flip-Flops

Christmas used to mean frosty mornings, glowing candles in the windows, the smell of cinnamon drifting from the kitchen, and bundling up in scarves to go to the Christmas market. Back in Germany, December was always about warmth against the cold, *Glühwein* in mittened hands, fairy lights twinkling against a dark winter sky, and the crunch of snow (or at least the wish for it) underfoot.

And every year, we all hoped for the *Weiße Weihnachten* - the “white Christmas” - to come. Sometimes, if we were lucky, it really happened, and the world lay under a soft sugar blanket, magical and still.

Here in Namibia, the wish is different. Now we hope for rain. When it finally arrives, it brings that fresh, earthy smell and the promise of something new, green grass sprouting, leaves unfolding, animals finding food again, and babies growing strong. Rain here is more than weather; it's a sign of hope and of the future itself.

And of course, there were the Christmas cookies. I used to bake tray after tray, filling the house with the scent of sugar, oranges, cinnamon, and cloves. Here in Namibia, I was determined to carry on this tradition, only to discover that my dough quite literally melted away in the summer heat! I quickly learned that if I want to bake cookies here, I must start very early in the morning, when it's still a little cooler, before the sun turns my kitchen into a sauna.

Our Christmas meal isn't goose with dumplings, it's more likely a braai under the acacia trees, with family and friends gathering around the fire. There's no need for mulled wine; a chilled glass of South African rosé or a gin and tonic with ice cubes will do just fine.



And then there's the tree. In Germany, it was always green and fragrant, carrying the scent of the forest indoors. Now, my Namibian tree is a *Weißdorn*, naked, essentially just wood. In Namibia, people often use so-called *Trockenbäume* instead of firs: branches or trunks of thorn and acacia trees like *Weißdorn* or *Schwarzdorn*, decorated lovingly as Christmas trees. Once adorned with *Kugeln* and lights, even these dry desert trees radiate festive spirit.

These days, everything of mine is plastic, because my cats simply love to play with the glittery baubles—as if Christmas were designed just for them.

I used to think Christmas needed snow to feel magical. Now I know it's not the snow at all, it's the togetherness. It's laughter around the fire, it's the stories shared, it's the quiet gratitude for the people and the place that make life feel full.

So yes, Christmas in flip-flops might not look like the postcards, but for me it's become its own kind of wonder. A reminder that traditions can travel, bend, and reshape themselves, and still carry the same joy, whether under snowy rooftops in Germany or beneath the endless blue skies of Namibia.

And between us, there's something deliciously rebellious about celebrating Christmas with sunscreen instead of snow boots.

With festive warmth from the desert, Sandra. ❄️

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Gateway to Africa... but a little hot!

*Where summer never ends
and the mercury never rests*

words by Karel Swanepoel



Heat is nothing new to Namibians. In fact, most of us only properly function above 28 degrees Celsius! My personal cut-off is 18 degrees — below that I'm officially cold and want to crawl back into bed. People often say you can dress warmly in the cold, but you can't dress cool in the heat. I take that as a challenge and only wear what's strictly necessary to get me through the day without being arrested for indecency!

This time of year — the hot season in the Southern Hemisphere — is by far my favourite. Born on a blistering day in November, I think heat is so ingrained in my being that I get withdrawal symptoms if I'm cold for more than a few minutes at a time.

While white snow-covered pine trees, roast turkey, and toboggans define November and December for many, we in the Southern Hemisphere have coconut-scented suntan lotion, flip-flops, and watermelon.

In this land of wide-open spaces and sunshine, seeing images of Saint Nick on a sled laughing through the snow always brings an ironic smile to my face. As a child, I wondered if climbing down the chop-and-wors-scented chimney of a built-in braai made him hungry, or whether he took off his North Pole jacket when he delivered our gifts to cool down. I remember once seeing a homeless man passed out in a downtown park wearing a full Father

Christmas suit; my young, ignorant mind assumed it was heatstroke. My parents assured me it wasn't — that he was just tired from all his deliveries!

Namibia regularly experiences sweltering temperatures around this time of year, often pushing the mercury into the brain-boiling forties. Then, just before nature-induced fever dreams drive us completely mad, we head off on family-centric adventures for a week or two — just so we can be hot somewhere else. House-sitters are organised to feed the pets and tend to a wilting garden through the worst of the heat, and then the monumental task of "family packing" begins!

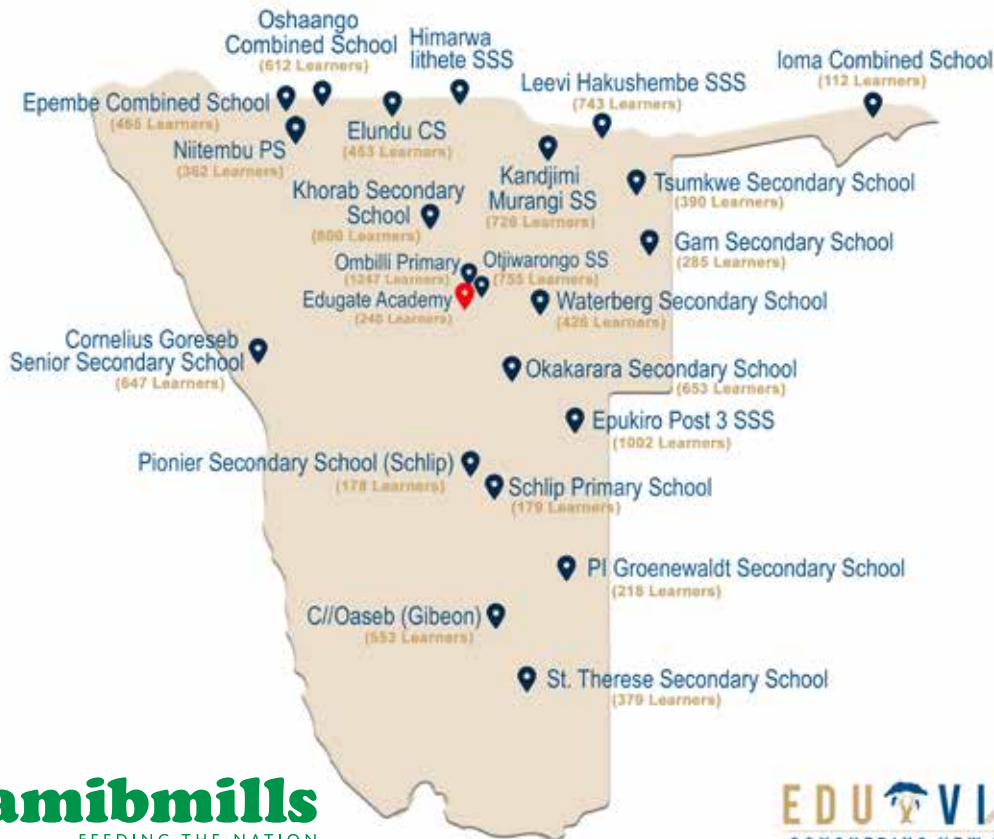
An intricate Tetris game ensues as cars, trailers, and roof racks are packed and repacked by space-conscious dads asking, "Do you really need that?" in an attempt to make the line vanish and magically reduce the mountain of paraphernalia that must accompany the family on holiday. Meanwhile, cold meatballs, carrot strips, and biltong are packed by moms for consumption under the canopy of a desolate picnic spot en route to the Shangri-La of choice.

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‘If we touch hearts, minds will follow.’

– Frikkie Louw, Eduvision cofounder

It took a mere visit to an under-resourced school at Tsumkwe in the northeastern Otjozondjupa region of Namibia to spark a countrywide transformation in education.

“The only thing I can do is teach,” Louw says.

And for the many children at remote villages whose lives have been touched by this project, Louw’s passion is transforming lives, one learner at a time.

Together, Louw and his business partner, Jurita Potgieter, founded Eduvision in 2018 to take quality teaching, digital resources and technology to rural marginalised communities across Namibia.

The entity essentially installs digital screens at remote schools and streams live lessons to them, helping the schools offer children equitable, future-ready education.

Learners at many rural schools face significant challenges to access quality basic education. Louw and Potgieter use technology to help these schools connect to quality resources.

Both have extensive classroom experience.

Potgieter believes every child deserves the chance to learn. “I’ve witnessed eyes light up – not just with understanding, but from knowing that someone, somewhere, believes in your potential,” she says.

Adds Louw: “Eduvision is about reaching children in overlooked places so they feel seen and valued. When a child at Tsumkwe SS raises a hand or solves a problem on an interactive display, they realise they matter.

“We aren’t just building digital tools; we’re shaping futures. Every time we inspire a learner, we invest in their potential. If we touch hearts, minds will follow.”

Taking Action

Louw says society is good at pointing fingers, “talking all day about who’s responsible for the state of schools in Namibia”.

But the real question, he says, is what are we doing to improve things?



The Gods Must Be Crazy was produced and released in 1980

“Blaming others doesn’t accomplish anything. Let’s aim to take action,” he says.

Key sponsors, including Paratus, which specialises in high-speed and reliable satellite internet, have taken action alongside Louw.

This has enabled real-time video and audio transmission to even the remotest classrooms, also making live interaction possible.

“Learners can raise their hands, ask questions, and participate directly. They actively engage in solving problems on the interactive displays (screens), guided by qualified teachers.”

Louw says the main mentors in his life were all teachers. One lesson he will never forget is to “just storm ahead to meet the future head-on”.

And Magdalena Nujoma, a learner from Tsumkwe SS, is doing just that.

She has become living proof of Eduvion's impact and potential. Nujoma, a Grade 12 learner from the village of Oshititumba, was first introduced to the Eduvion programme in 2019.

In 2024, she obtained a degree in education at the University of Namibia, specialising in upper primary education, majoring in Mathematics and English.

Calling All Tourists

Tourists can help make a difference in the lives of more children like Nujoma by donating to Eduvion.

It is essential to understand that all poor children in Namibia’s remote areas write the same examinations as children from affluent families in the capital with access to plentiful resources and excellent teachers.

Tourists can help bring these teachers to underserved school communities virtually by donating towards installing interactive touch screens at these schools as a first step.

Louw says professional teachers also pre-record quality lessons, which are then always available to remote areas, allowing learners the benefit of being able to “forward and rewind lessons”.

The Finances

Louw says digital interactive screens and equipment roll-out costs N\$120 000 per school.

Eduvion has thus far reached about 12 000 remote learners in nine of the country’s regions, he says.

“Calculating the additional costs for the 22 remote Eduvion schools related to travel, connectivity, and equipment amounts to approximately N\$350 000 per month to sustain all of them – roughly N\$19 000 per school per month,” he says.

Potgieter says the first sponsors to come on board were FNB Namibia, Paratus Namibia, B2Gold and Namib Mills.

The Birth

The Namibian-born Louw matriculated at Windhoek High School in 1973. He then started studying at North-West University in South Africa in 1974, earning degrees in geography and education. He began teaching at Etosha Secondary School in 1980 and later became Windhoek High School's deputy principal.

He has also served as principal at Otjiwarongo Secondary School and as subject adviser in geography and management training in the Ondangwa east area.

In 2003, he founded Edugate Academy and led it until 2018. During this time, he created the e-learning programme Eduvision.

Louw says the initiative started in 2017, when the national school exam results were published across the country.

"I examined the results and noticed that Tsumkwe Secondary School ranked last among 183 schools for both Grade 12 and Grade 10. So, one Sunday morning, I decided to drive to Tsumkwe to gain a better understanding of the situation.

"Fortunately, I had spoken to the principal and asked if we could offer any assistance or support. This is more or less where everything started."

Little did Louw know at the time he would soon drive 8 000 km per month in service of what would become Eduvision.

The concept was officially launched on 6 August 2018, with a landmark live science lesson broadcast from Otjiwarongo (Louw's base) to Tsumkwe – bringing remote learners face to face with expert teaching via the Eduvision interactive display classroom.

The Future

Louw jokes that he is now a professional beggar. Securing sustainable, long-term funding to support has become a full-time job, he says.

Eduvision believes in in-person visits to remote schools every second month, and adds that they have received unprecedented support from donors like Dunlop, which has helped with tyres for long roads.

We are also thankful to Indongo Toyota and Northern Fuel for the luxurious journey in their bakkies. Wherever we travel, we enjoy relaxing at the Lodges of Gondwana as oases after long trips," adds Frikkie.

"And where can you find an even more fulfilling job description?" he says.

By next year, 25 schools will make use of Eduvision's technology as a model for nationwide growth over the next three years. The dream is to expand the Eduvision network from 22 to 40 connected schools.

Pearls of Wisdom

"Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words," Louw believes, quoting St Francis of Assisi.

He admits that the journey is challenging from time to time. Sometimes he struggles in dust and heat trying to make the technological setup work.

"But then you reach another school, and against all odds, the children sit and work seamlessly, connecting with our schools and teachers. " Dust and heat " suddenly forgotten.

Louw shares the touching story of the opening ceremony of Eduvision's venture at Tsumkwe, illustrating the power of connecting different worlds.

He suggested at the time to Potgieter that she display the classic comedy 'The Gods Must Be Crazy' by Jamie Uys, on the touchscreen at the event, since it was filmed there many years ago. This was intended as a special opening movie night.

That evening, the community gathered to watch the movie and test out the smartscreen.

"And there was this grown San man sitting perched on the edge of his chair, literally in stitches, laughing at every scene and predicting what would happen next. It turns out he was one of the San learners featured in the movie.

"Seeing the legendary scene of the Coke bottle dropped from the sky for the first time really made his day – probably more than the actual movie did back then."

Louw says a decade from now he would be happy if he could look back knowing he put a smile on even just one learner's face "because they've learnt something".

Considering the many sponsors supporting Eduvision, it's clear that, as the African proverb says, a single spark does not make a fire.

And in my mind's eye, I can see a nation's children gathering around this fire of learning ignited by an ordinary man, born to teach, supported by many people willing to throw a log on to keep the fire burning. 🌿



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Windhoek's longest running biltong shop, situated in Klein Windhoek, is home to Namibian's best beef and game dried products, with the floating trophies on the shelf. The shop boasts a wide variety of products, and it has transformed to a "braai destination" where you can order anything for your corporate or home braai functions.

A huge part of the biltong market focuses on corporate hampers, year-end gifts to staff, biltong cakes gift vouchers for celebrations, as well as unique "foodie" meat cuts which you will generally not find in butcheries.



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Namibian "foodies", catering companies and home cooks alike, love our flexibility to get them what they need for those unique recipe ideas, i.e. the whole brisket, the tumbled, marinated steaks or the ready-made packs fit for travel fridges for the Botswana or Kaokoland Trip. The shop welcomed the 4th owners in 23 years and obtained the Meatboard Seal of Quality Accreditation again in 2025, attesting to its supply chain and superb hygiene standards.



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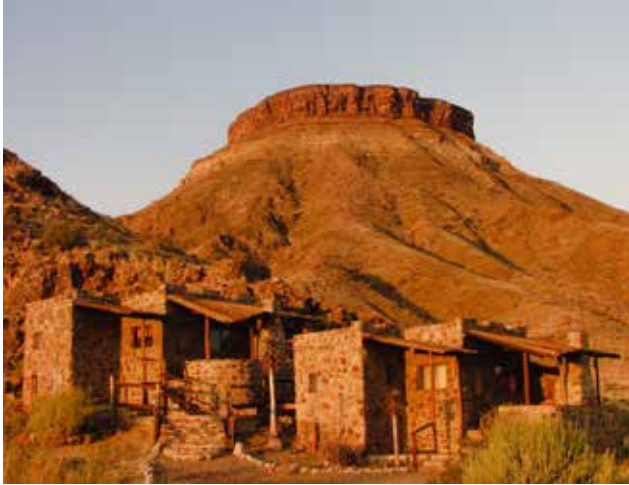
Mount Canyon Guest Farm

*An authentic Namibian
escape for those who prefer
meaning over mass tourism*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



Mount Canyon Guest Farm is not a polished resort or mass-tourism stop. It's a heartfelt creation built on vision, courage, and love for people and the land.

When the Baard family opened Mount Canyon Guest Farm in August 2023, Namibia was in the grip of a harsh drought — not an easy time to begin a new venture, especially in a remote corner of the country. But what they lacked in timing, they made up for in passion and perseverance.

“From the beginning, our goal wasn't to build something big,” they explained with a smile. “We wanted to create something meaningful — a place where every guest feels seen, heard, and cared for.”

And that's exactly what Mount Canyon Guest Farm has become: a haven for travellers seeking authenticity, calm, and genuine Namibian hospitality.

Just 85 kilometres from the majestic Fish River Canyon — in the vast, sunlit landscapes of southern Namibia, where silence has its own rhythm and sunsets paint the sky in gold — a small guest farm has quietly been winning hearts: “We don't aim for large numbers. We focus on personal attention and genuine connections. Each guest is unique, and we want them to feel that.”

At Mount Canyon, every detail tells a story of care. The rooms are warm and inviting, the food is home-cooked and generous, and the hosts are always ready with a smile, a story, or a helping hand.

The guest farm offers six beautifully appointed rooms and three mountain-view chalets, each with its own unique

character and charm. They can exclusively accommodate a maximum of 20 guests per night.

Who doesn't want to visit the Fish River Canyon? But at Mount Canyon, guests enjoy double the joy as they discover the farm's own private canyon. It's a place of raw beauty, carved by time and silence, where sundowner drives offer breathtaking views and moments of pure peace. For the adventurer, Mount Canyon Guest Farm also offers a wide variety of hiking activities, allowing you to explore the rugged landscape and soak in the natural beauty of the area. And during the hot summer months, you can cool down in the refreshing pool. You can look forward to guided nature hikes, guided canyon expeditions, nature photography, and star-filled nights.

As the day fades, guests gather on rocky cliffs with an icy drink in hand, watching the world turn golden. It's said that Mount Canyon's sunsets are among the best in Namibia... you be the judge.

Though still the “new kid on the block,” Mount Canyon Guest Farm's reputation has been growing steadily, fuelled by word-of-mouth and heartfelt reviews. Visitors keep returning — not just for the views, but for the feeling.

It's a place where simplicity meets sincerity, where you can slow down, breathe deeply, and remember what matters most. The Baards like to say: “Come as you are — leave as family.”

Mount Canyon Guest Farm is located an hour's drive from Keetmanshoop, Grunau, and the Fish River Canyon's viewpoint. ❖

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Speedlink Prepaid

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Download Speed (up to)	6Mbps	8Mbps	10Mbps	25Mbps
Upload Speed (up to)	2Mbps	2Mbps	2Mbps	10Mbps
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
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Monthly charge (N\$) (36-month)	639	749	979	1,679

Speedlink liteplus (Symmetric)

Package/Contract Period	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	50Mbps
Download Speed (up to)	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	50Mbps
Upload Speed (up to)	10Mbps	15Mbps	25Mbps	50Mbps
Internet usage	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
CPE	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded	Excluded
Monthly charge (N\$) (12-month)	799	989	1,299	1,979
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In the heart of Namibia's Aussenkehr Valley, Silverlands Namibia is turning arid landscapes into thriving agricultural hubs. Part of the Silverlands Group, a leading agricultural enterprise across southern and East Africa, the company is renowned for its commitment to climate resilience, inclusive growth, and community empowerment.

Silverlands Namibia manages over 900 hectares of table grapes and date palms, producing premium fruit for global markets. Its unique location along the Orange River offers excellent conditions for early grape harvests, giving Namibia a competitive edge in international supply chains. During peak season, the farms employ up to 4 000 workers, making Silverlands one of the country's largest employers and a vital contributor to rural livelihoods.



Beyond large-scale farming, Silverlands invests in training, infrastructure, and innovation. The group also supports smallholder farmers across sub-Saharan Africa with access to seeds, technical expertise, and market opportunities, helping transform agriculture into a driver of economic empowerment.

Nedbank Namibia steps in

To accelerate this growth, Nedbank Namibia has partnered with Achill Island Investments, the operator behind Silverlands Namibia. This landmark funding deal will enable Silverlands Namibia to expand operations, introduce new grape varieties, and enhance sustainable farming practices. It also supports the installation of advanced technologies, such as a state-of-the-art date sorter, ensuring premium quality and efficiency.

“This partnership with Achill Island Investments is a powerful example of how Nedbank is enabling growth in sectors that matter,” says JG van Graan, Nedbank Namibia’s Chief Commercial Officer. “Agriculture is a cornerstone of Namibia’s economy, and we are proud to support a client that combines operational excellence with sustainability and social impact.”

Looking ahead

Silverlands Namibia’s strategic outlook includes further expansion, most notably a 240-hectare date development set to become a world-class producer of Medjool Dates. These initiatives will strengthen Namibia’s role in global agricultural markets while creating more jobs and fostering innovation.

By backing Silverlands Namibia, Nedbank Namibia is investing in a future where finance, technology, and sustainability converge, ensuring that Namibia’s desert continues to bloom. 🌱

For more information, contact:

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MINDSCAPES:

Swopping hotels for hiking boots:

One woman's hike to healing and self-love

words by Linda de Jager | photographs supplied

“Be true to yourself. My motto is to eat, walk, and live. I cook, walk, and love, but living feels more powerful.”



Kelly Beukes has done what many a burnt-out corporate ‘slave’ is only dreaming about.

The seasoned hospitality professional with international experience ditched her taxing career in hotel management and events planning for the life-changing power of hiking and connecting with nature.

This new chapter started when she moved back to Namibia in 2009 after notable roles at Hilton hotels in the United Kingdom and South Africa, as well as several years managing weddings at Zevenwacht Wine Estates.

As the founder of Kelly in the Wild, she now applies her can-do attitude to leading tailor-made hikes, mainly along the coast.

You offer tourists welcome relief, catching some fresh air after tackling Namibia’s long roads. Tell us more.

Yes, tourists really enjoy the fresh air, especially those who have been on boat cruises or who have visited Sossusvlei.

They’ve been sitting in cars for the whole trip – some for as long as three weeks. And they stay at a place for just one night before hitting the road again, while others choose to get some exercise when they reach the coast.

How did your decision to get tourists hiking come about?

The decision to start Kelly’s Wild Adventures and Tours Namibia came about in 2000. Essentially, I began a new chapter of my life with my two daughters, with the need to fulfil myself, give something back, and earn money at the same time. That was my midlife crisis.

I started hiking as a result. The first trek I undertook was a 150km journey with Wild Cherry Adventures, completed over nine days along the Kunene River from Ruacana to Epupa Falls. It involved camping in the wild and complete immersion in nature, marking a transformative experience for me.



Who mentored you during this transition?

My life coach, Jan Grobler, based in Windhoek, guided me towards self-love and self-acceptance. I regained control of my life and started afresh. We often meet via Skype.

I ended up hiking the Fish River and the Cederberg mountains, quite a few of the major trails. Then I decided, why not start something for myself?

What makes your brand stand out?

Kelly in the Wild is about inspiring women to love and accept themselves. The brand is about loving, having fun, and enjoying nature.

What can hikers anticipate when booking your Walvis Bay Pelican Point walk?

They will see the marshlands with various birds and jackals. Sometimes we even find tiny eggs. And sometimes we arrive to find about 500 pelicans sitting on the beach.

Because there are no vehicles there, you can only walk, and only when it's low tide. It's beautiful, essentially untouched, with plenty to see along the way. It's very weather-dependent, as well as dependent on the tides.

There's a seal named Klaus at the salt pans' pump house who puts on a show for visitors by catching fish, which is loved by foreigners. The water is generally shallow, so I advise wearing water shoes. The walk across the marshes is straightforward, on solid sand, but may get wet.

What does this walk cost, how long does it take, and how fit must one be to do it?

The cost is N\$1 500, including breakfast and a 4x4 drive to the starting point and pick-up from the end of the route.

The whole tour is usually four hours, including a 12km walk. My children, aged 10 and 12, have done it. They complain a bit, but keep going, taking breaks when needed. If you're fairly fit and walk weekly, I'd recommend it. It's slackpacking

In some regions of South Africa, a festive delicacy is deep-fried caterpillars of the Emperor Moth – considered a source of good luck for the New Year.



(hiking with a lighter day pack), with no overnight stays.

I carry my first aid kit, water for the hikers, and a small tent, since there are no toilet facilities. Guests can use the tent as an enclosure. My drivers drop us off, take us around, and set up the picnic at the end of the hike.

What is your top tip for hikers?

Never hike without sunscreen, a hat, comfortable shoes (wear an old pair), dry socks, and plenty of water.

What unique skills do you offer the local tourism sector?

My key strength is my ability to connect with people and understand their needs, which helps me deliver a personalised service. Recognising each guest's unique requirements is crucial for creating a positive experience, and I excel at picking up on these quickly.

For example, I left my management role at Lagoon Suites

Walvis Bay guest house in early 2025, where I managed for four years and helped the hotel achieve the highest rating at Walvis Bay, an achievement reflected in positive reviews on booking.com.

Ultimately, my approach centres on truly understanding and catering to guests.

What is your advice to those who are new to the tourist industry?

Nationalities play a significant role. You need to understand who you're dealing with. Engage with guests by showing interest, showing that you're knowledgeable about other nations, and uplifting them.

Do you do other hikes as well?

I've also tried a two-day hike in Donkerhoek West, part of Namib Naukluft Park. It's about 24km to 30km over a weekend, and it's gaining some traction. We also organise group events like birthday parties, which include camping or glamping.

Michelangelo

—PROFILE—



In the 1800s, the King of Siam (Thailand) offered President Abraham Lincoln a live elephant as a gift to help “improve transportation” in America. Lincoln politely declined – explaining that the U.S. wasn’t the right climate for elephants.

Join the
#RefillRevolution

How do you leave your mark?

Be true to yourself, be in it to win it. Don't let outside opinions affect you, focus on your goals and put yourself out there.

You recently discovered a new hobby and a new community. Tell us more.

I started sailing recently and I've met a wonderful group of people. We are like a family, a small community supporting each other and spending a lot of time waiting for the right sailing weather.

You also promote tourism by advocating for the environment. What does this involve?

I started cleaning the beach because it was very polluted, especially at the lagoon and sandbank, where we last cleaned. Most of the rubbish comes from the sea, washing ashore.

We've done several clean-ups by working with local schools and communities. In our latest effort, we collected 80 bags of trash, including unexpected items like fishing lines and ropes that can harm animals like seals and flamingos.

It's very important to keep the beach clean. I believe in being environmentally friendly and want to leave no bad footprints, just our walking footprints.

What can the tourism sector do to address the pollution issue?

Boats both within and outside the harbour lack proper waste disposal systems. Many types of rubbish, including plastic and fishing lines, end up in the ocean. Our next step will be to call on the industry and authorities to assist.

As I'm new to this movement, we're still in the planning stage, but our main aims are to involve fishing factories, schools, and tackle pollution. A waste management system would need to be put into place and would have to be regulated for it to be successful. 🍷



To find out more, visit www.kellyinthewild.net.
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Away from the Madding Crowd

*Sustainable comfort and wild beauty
in the Omaruru surrounds*

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied



At the heart of Eremutua 225 Guestfarm near Omaruru, is the owners' commitment to a blend of traditional farming and conservation. It's that preservation of landscape and wildlife which makes a stay at Eremutua 225 Guestfarm exceptional.

In the north-west of Namibia lies Eremutua, an authentic guest farm where the comfort and rich experience of each visitor is as important as the farming and conservation ethos. Eremutua was originally a traditional cattle farm. The family, determined to breathe new life into the land, transformed it into a guest farm where all who visit can immerse themselves in the beauty of the Namibian landscapes, enjoy the peace and tranquillity, and spend their days exploring and adventuring.

The family's vision is to integrate traditional farming methods with landscape and wildlife conservation practices. This philosophy and approach play a crucial role in preserving the biodiversity on Eremutua: "We have a holistic approach to farming, not only to ensure the long-term productivity of our land but also to contribute to its

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



58

DECEMBER 2025



In 1968, Apollo 8 astronauts read from the Book of Genesis while orbiting the Moon on Christmas Eve – the first holiday ever celebrated off Earth.

Michelangelo

—TRAVEL—



conservation, making it a sustainable and environmentally friendly way to combine agriculture with tourism.”

First things first.

You’re going to be extraordinarily comfortable in stylish double rooms, equipped with all the mod cons, private bathrooms, and large all-round terraces. It’s from your little safe haven that you’ll look out over the Namibian bush and granite rock hills and breathe deeply. You’ll be self-catering, with access to a fully equipped kitchen, outside fire pit, barbecue area, and more. It’s a true farm holiday with all the privacy or sociability you seek.

You’re welcome to simply birdwatch, swim, and sun yourself in and around the pool all day, or amble around the farm capturing its beauty on film. But you’ll also love heading out on a scenic sundowner or sunset drive around the farm to soak in the beautiful views, exploring the rock paintings on an excursion — Eremutua is home to some extraordinary heritage sites — or setting off on the hiking and cycling trails on the farm. Bring your bicycles, bring your binocs, and bring your costumes. You’re going to have an authentic farm holiday in supreme comfort — no finer way to recharge your batteries. ❖

Location: D2339 | Tel: +264 67 290113 | eremutua225@gmail.com



Frau Heidi Jastram in conversation with CEO and change consultant Monika von Wietersheim.

Hotel Prinzessin Rupprecht: Where History and Humanity Share a Home

words and photographs by Linda de Jagger

Once upon a time, there was a princess whose legacy lived on at Swakopmund – not in a fairy-tale castle, but in the graceful old Hotel Prinzessin Rupprecht.

I recently booked into the hotel, since I needed a safe place to leave my gear and some documents for the day.

Situated in the centre of Swakopmund, the picture of the beautiful 1902 building and its affordable rates caught my eye while making a last-minute booking on Agoda.

I didn't read the small print, however.

I headed to a room for backpackers – a clean, private space with a secure locker.

The hotel offers four rooms, each with an en suite bathroom and its own theme for N\$1 220 per night.

The backpackers' section offers five separate rooms, but shared shower and toilet facilities are available from around N\$675 – both including breakfast.

My criteria as a day visitor were met: The Wi-Fi was reliable, the shower clean, the water warm, and the bank in the centre of town was only a 10-minute walk away.

The room had a small washbasin and a secure safe for my belongings.

Pleasant Surprise

Imagine my confusion when I realised I had accidentally booked myself into an old-age home.

The Prinzessin Rupprecht Senioren Heim, along with its frail care unit and qualified nurses, is funded by hotel guests.

Residents and guests have separate breakfast rooms, but share a charming garden. The atmosphere of the place is invitingly calm. I would describe it as separate, yet connected, with the space being open for guests to mingle with the elderly.

Meaningful travel

According to the Namibia Tourism Board, meaningful travel is a trend among tourists, involving that they contribute to the areas they visit instead of just seeking pleasure.

After my brief stay, I quickly returned to learn more about this business model – also because my mother told me she was born in room one, and I just had to snap a picture of the spacious room.

I paused in room one to reflect on how time flows—the beginnings and endings that define people's lives and the spaces that hold their stories. I also considered how actions by a wealthy princess from long ago remain relevant today.



The beautiful 1902 building.

Monika von Wietersheim, a management accountant, systemic change consultant and chief executive of the Prinzessin Rupprecht Heim Foundation Trust, shared some insights and the history of the establishment.

Von Wietersheim says the old-age home's buildings belonged to the Red Cross Society in Germany since the beginning of the previous century.

"I've been a change consultant here since 2022 to bring some order and structure to the business. The position became vacant and was advertised for quite some time, but no one wanted to take up the challenge.

"The Red Cross Society transferred the business activities to the Namibian trust in 2014. My qualifications were ideally suited to help navigate this transition. My husband and I owned the Swakopmunder Buchhandlung for many years," she says.

Rest and Healing

When the Swakopmund municipality donated the land to the Red Cross Society in 1911, it was quite a large piece of land. They had to sign for it. It was intended as a convalescent home,



A closer look at the backpackers' rooms and shower facilities.



The luxury rooms include an en-suite bathroom.

a place where people could come, rest, and regain their energy. And a place of tranquillity.”

She says she aims to keep it that way.

Built in 1902, the building was originally used as a hospital until 1911, when it turned into a military hospital named after its patron, Princess Maria Gabriele Rupprecht, the wife of the Bavarian crown prince, Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria.

Rupprecht raised funds for the Red Cross to support Germans in other countries.

“Unfortunately, she died very young, in her mid-thirties,” says Von Wietersheim.

She recruited Marie Douglas, a midwife from East Prussia, who was also a Red Cross sister. A new maternity ward was needed at Swakopmund after the Antonius Hospital closed its maternity section.

Marie Douglas oversaw the hospital buildings and staff between 1914 and 1939. She worked there for 25 years, interrupted by World War I, when she was transferred to Keetmanshoop.

Douglas was awarded a Florence Nightingale medal and retired in Germany at the age of 70.

Next to the hospital were officers’ barracks, which later

became a school. The dormitories were built on the premises owned by the Red Cross. In the 1970s, the Rössing Foundation rented the rooms, and they later became cottages for the elderly.

In 2014, Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Schwesternschaft Übersee e.V. transferred the business activities to the Prinzessin Rupprecht Heim Foundation, and subsequently, the trustees decided to create a unique business opportunity by generating income through the hotel.

Simultaneously, they aimed to fund the needs of the elderly.

“The main challenge is to maintain the old building and to be self-supporting,” Von Wietersheim says.

She says everyone pays for their stay, yet “we operate in a setting where we serve the elderly, and the profits are reinvested into supporting them. This means we don’t need to raise the rent annually.”

The pensioners’ rooms cost between N\$14 000 and N\$20 000 per month, she says.

Von Wietersheim says balancing running the business with a human touch is a challenge.

“I’m very grateful for the employees, especially those like Abner and Fransiska, who have been here for many years, or Paavo, who has served for 36 years.”



A group of long-term staff members at Prinzessin Rupprecht Heim Foundation, including Lucia Tjiposa (22 years), Hildegard Tjiposa (23 years), Franziska Gaeses (26 years), Abner Alukolo (29 years), and Paavo Nehale (36 years).

Trial and Error

Von Wietersheim says refining the business model has been a process of trial and error.

“When I started in February 2022, I had to go through many files because the original mastermind, lawyer Herman Kinghorn, had passed away. I inherited his notes and files to understand his vision, with help from a few others. Most of the other trustees had either died or resigned by then,” she says.

“Being an accountant with change management skills helped me understand how to bring everything together practically, and that’s how we grew.”

She admits that the environment is not everyone’s cup of tea.

“That’s why we are deliberately framing our advertising in a specific way,” she says.

“I believe people are hesitant to explore this model because it is so unique. I don’t think the world knows about it.”

It is well known that many elderly people run out of money and face destitution in small, dilapidated towns across the country. And I cannot help but wonder whether this business model might possibly be adapted elsewhere.

“We accommodate 15 or 16 elderly people, depending on the units. We also have 26 beds in the frail care,” she says.



The Senior Dining Room.



There is a peaceful garden to enjoy.

Ageing is No Illness

“The primary challenge is how to promote the establishment to people, many of whom are initially hesitant to spend holidays in an old-age home.

“Some believe that elderly people suffer from some kind of illness.”

Von Wietersheim believes perspectives on ageing and the elderly are limiting, but that “A place like this helps to alter this mindset of ageing and retirement and affirms that it can be quite a fun place and phase. We even host dance and art classes that are open to the public.”

She tells me the story about a young man from South Africa who booked a stay at the hotel while working online.

“When he arrived and saw the pensioners, he wanted to cancel and leave, but we told him he would lose his payment. He decided to stay for a week, then extended to a month, saying it was the best thing that happened to him.

“He enjoyed talking to the elderly and relaxing in the peaceful garden, which helped him escape the stress of his demanding job.”

Last Sacraments and the Sunshine Within

Despite the residents’ warm energy and calm wisdom, the frail care facility serves as a stark reminder that life ultimately comes to an end. Guests usually do not visit the frail care section. I did, and the fragility of the residents made me unbearably sad and left me in a reflective mood that lingered long after I had gone. I ask Monika how she copes.

“Being with someone until their last breath with compassion shows courage and passion. I have developed this courage,” Von Wietersheim says about this harsh reality she faces daily.

“I’ve learnt here that to honour the dignity of each person, regardless of how their life was, what they did in their life, and simply to respect all the hardships they have endured, I should also step back in my judgement and see the goodness in the person.

“Each person has a sunshine within them. I absolutely believe that.”

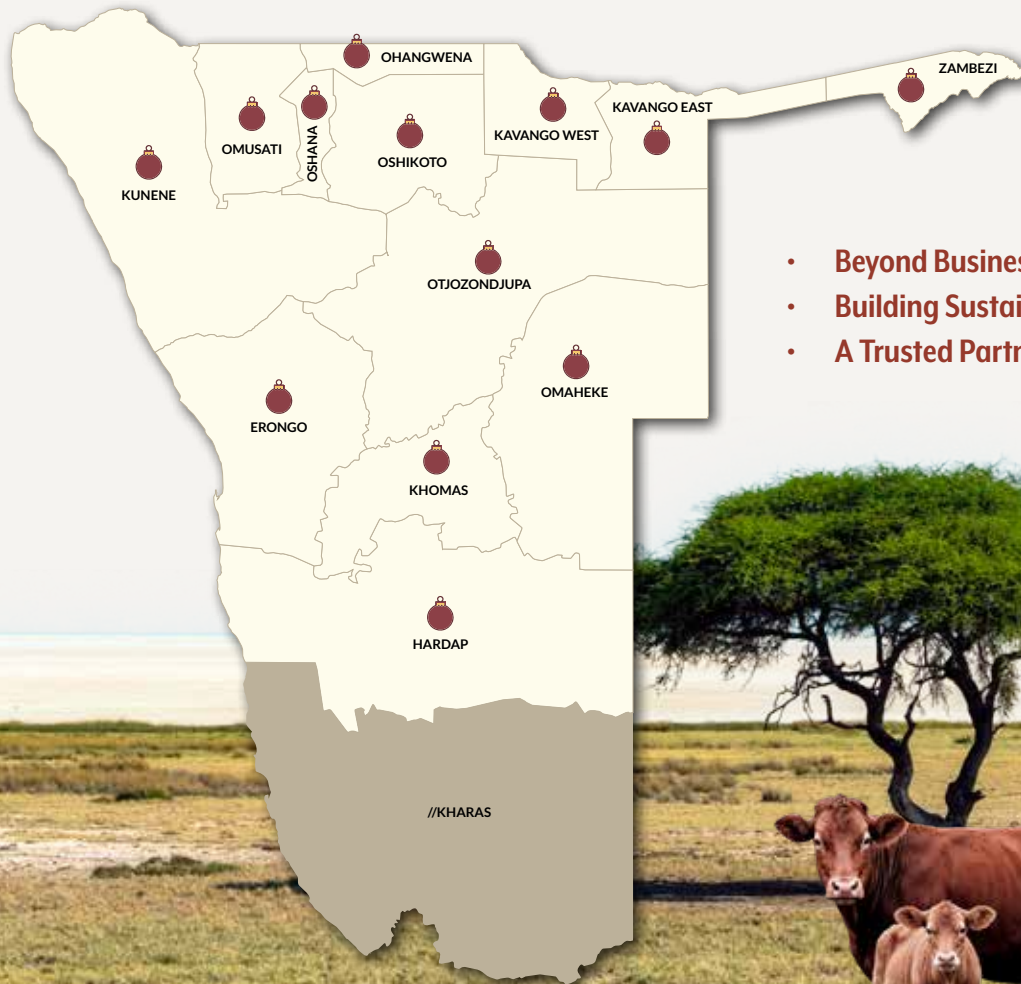
And so, more than a century later, the spirit of Princess Rupprecht lingers – not in grandeur, but in the quiet dignity of a home that still shelters and heals. ❖

The property changed owners at the end of 2025. Watch this space with forthcoming news and a follow-up article in 2026.

Contact info@hotel-prinzessin-rupprecht.com or altersheim@hotel-prinzessin-rupprecht.com for more.

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MICHELLE WARDEN'S POSTCARDS TO NAMIBIA



A Festive Frolic of Togetherness Across Cultures

If there's one thing Namibians and Kiwis both get right, besides laying claim to making the best meat pies, it is throwing a good party. And I'm not talking about the usual big holidays; any excuse will do. Whether moving to kwaito beats back home or swaying to a pākuru tune in the Bay of Islands, both nations will find their way to a celebration.

In Namibia, festivals aren't just dates on a calendar. They're woven into daily life. Whether it's the Windhoek Karneval (WIKa — if you haven't danced to a polka and scrambled to catch the sweets from the floats on Independence Avenue, have you even lived?) or Heroes' Day (when the whole



country pauses to honour its past and revel in the pride that pulses through our veins), the real magic happens in the streets, the stadiums, and the backyards. You'll find aunties in traditional dress swapping stories with sneaker-clad teenagers while someone's uncle DJs from an Isuzu bakkie under a camelthorn tree. It's loud, it's proud, and yes, there's a braai. In Namibia, even remembrance comes with a sosatie and roosterkoek.

Then, of course, there's Oktoberfest, which rolls in towards the end of October like that loud cousin who always shows up with beer and bratwurst. But it's not only a German thing — everybody shows up. Oshiwambo speakers, Afrikaans jokers, Herero dancers, expats still mangling the word "boerewors" — all of them "prost-ing" together.

Events such as Sam Khubis Day, the /Ae //Gams Festival, and the Omagongo Marula Festival bring communities together in ways that defy description. You don't need to understand every word of the songs or every dance step. Just show up, smile, and maybe learn how to balance a pot on your head without spilling.

Now, plonk that festive spirit into Aotearoa, and you'll find a different rhythm with a bit more "chill" and a lot more jandals, but the same soul. Matariki, the Māori New Year, is all about looking back, remembering, and sharing kai. Families gather to honour ancestors, share stories, and eat until someone needs a nap. It's not about fireworks, it's about connection, and it is beautifully inclusive.

Diwali lights up New Zealand's cities with colour, music, and the kind of food that makes you wish stretchy pants were formal. Sikh, Hindu, and Tamil communities fling their doors wide open for neighbours, colleagues, and even the curious stranger. In New Zealand, "everyone's invited" isn't just a phrase — it's a lifestyle.

Then there's Halloween. In Namibia, it's more WhatsApp memes and maybe a pumpkin or two than full-blown costume parades. But here? Kiwis go all in. Kids dress up as dinosaurs and Dr Seuss characters, dogs are dressed as witches, and houses are decked out with skeletons and cobwebs. It's funny-spooky and a complete sugar overload.

Guy Fawkes Night was another surprise community bash, even though most folks seem a bit fuzzy on who Guy Fawkes

actually was. Who needs historical accuracy when you've got pyrotechnics and sausages? Fireworks explode over backyards, and kids wave sparklers like they're conducting orchestras. It's chaotic, noisy, fun, and signals the unofficial start of summer.

Now December peeps around the corner, and sun-soaked Christmas fever hits both countries. In New Zealand, Christmas trees made their appearance in the shops months ago, fairy lights are wrapped around pōhutukawa trees on the sidewalks and twinkle in windows, while Santa sweats it out in his red suit and jandals, looking forward to his beer and pineapple chunks. In Namibia, it's all about Christmas under the sun, Santa riding in on a donkey cart pulled by oryx, and the smell of braai wafting through the air. Decorations go up during November, and everything feels bright with anticipation and joy. Families gather, stories flow, and the spirit of togetherness is as warm as the sand under your feet.

What's struck me most is how different, yet similar, all these celebrations feel. The languages, customs, and food vary. But whether we're in Windhoek or Auckland, the spirit's the same. It's about connection and belonging, about honouring the past and finding joy in the present. Honestly, as someone who'll even throw a party just for figuring out the AT app — I feel right at home.

This year, we are spending our first Christmas away from Namibia. Away from family and friends, the familiar smells, sounds, faces, and places that have shaped our Decembers for years. There's a heavy dose of homesickness, and I miss the chaos of the end-of-year parties, the clink of glasses, and the slightly burnt tjoppies that somehow always tasted just right. Still, there's this buzz of excitement too. We're stepping into something new, ready to try fresh traditions without letting go of the ones that matter to us.

So, here's to the season, the next celebration, the traditions that shaped us, the new cultures we're getting to know, and the new memories we'll create. Life's too short not to celebrate - and too beautiful not to share. ❖



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Where the Kavango River slows the day to a hush, Simanya River Lodge offers water facing suites, misty mornings, and sunsets mirrored in glassy current. Getting here is part of the calm: from Windhoek it's an easy six-hour drive north, then west beyond Nkurenkuru—just 13 kilometres further, to the river's edge. From Etosha's Namutoni/Von Lindequist Gate, join the scenic B15, the locally loved "Timber Route," winding through quiet woodlands, villages, and

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.



of fatherly advice had passed. He kept his mouth closed but looked at Cato imploringly. Cato shook his head.

'Not this time.'

'Why not?' asked Aurelius. 'Several sets of eyes are better than one? I'm sure the legion can stand watch both for a few hours. Take Macro.' He looked at Cato with a solicitous expression. 'For my peace of mind, eh? Oh, and take Junius too, as he was so keen to sound the alarm. It may be a minor incident then perhaps spending a night in the darkness might teach him to think more precipitately in future.'

'Is that an order, sir?'

'It is. Report to me when you have raised an arm to gather the attention of the camp. Come, back to headquarters to receive all the information that they are able to give you.'

'Yes, sir.'

With that, the legionary dismissed his entourage back towards the entrance to the camp. Cato shook his head.

'I'm sure,' said Junius, 'that you will cause unnecessary trouble. Will they resent me?'

'Lad, you are a noble, doubtless by virtue of family and rank. You have no prior military experience. You have served your time in the legion, but you are still a civilian in Rome. Take it from me, the legionaries will not respect you.'

'Oh, dear. Junius had hoped to win their respect at least.'

'You can still do that, Macro. When the time comes to face the Nubians.'

Cato gestured towards the entrance. 'It will happen rather sooner than you think.'

Andre Rix
2023

Wild Pages



– André Rix's First Solo Exhibition *An exhibition that protects Namibia's most elusive predator*

words and photographs by Fine Art Gallery



André Rix's exhibition opens on 20 December 2025 during *Swakopmund @ Night* and will remain on display until 17 January 2026. Half of the proceeds from the exhibition will support the two Brown Hyena Projects in Namibia, ensuring these elusive creatures receive vital protection and care.

The brown hyena is a rarely seen and often misunderstood predator. Internationally, it is listed as *Near Threatened* — a conservation status indicating that the species is declining and could soon qualify as endangered — with a global population estimated between 2,000 and 4,000 individuals. In Namibia, fewer than 300 are thought to roam the central and southern regions. Their survival is constantly challenged by habitat loss, human encroachment, and, sadly, senseless accidents or persecution. The work of the Brown Hyena Projects is crucial for preserving these shy and intelligent animals, and through this exhibition, visitors can contribute directly to their conservation.

The Artist

Born in 1993 in Cape Town and raised in the farming community of Philippi, André Rix developed a deep connection to nature from an early age. Working alongside his grandfather on the family farm, he grew up with a particular appreciation for Nguni cattle, whose patterns

Michelangelo

—ARTS—





and presence would later inspire his first explorations into art. After his grandfather passed away five years ago, André turned to painting as a tribute, initially exploring the Nguni patterns that held personal and familial significance. Over time, his work evolved to focus on capturing the spirit and character of animals, gradually expanding into a broader celebration of wildlife.

André's chosen medium is oil on the pages of old books — a combination that marries history and artistry. Each page carries its own narrative, and the aged text adds layers of memory and texture to the paintings, creating a unique intimacy. By working in small-scale formats, André makes his work both approachable and collectible, ensuring that original pieces can be enjoyed by a wider audience.

In addition to wildlife, André also paints custom pet portraits, capturing the essence and personality of each animal. His work demonstrates a rare sensitivity, whether depicting domestic companions or the majestic creatures of Namibia's wild landscapes.

About Wild Pages

Wild Pages invites visitors into a world where wildlife, history, and narrative converge. Each painting tells a story, combining meticulous attention to detail with a profound sense of place. Through his choice of medium — oil on aged book pages — André transforms everyday objects into canvases of memory, infusing each artwork with both history and vitality.

The Gallery invites all art lovers and wildlife supporters to experience André Rix's first solo exhibition. With 50% of proceeds going to the Brown Hyena Projects, visitors can enjoy exceptional art while making a tangible contribution to the protection of one of Namibia's most extraordinary and enigmatic species. 🦘

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Abenab Lodge: Namibia's Hidden Treasure Waiting to Be Discovered

word by Beulah Boois-Beukes | photograph supplied

Nestled in the heart of the Otjozondjupa Region, just outside Grootfontein, the dusty gravel roads lead you up the red and white sign beaming the words; Abenab Lodge 500m with an arrow pointing you in the direction of a destination that effortlessly combines tranquillity, adventure, and heritage! Known by locals as one of Namibia's best-kept secret, this hidden treasure offers visitors a rare blend of warm hospitality, historical wonder, and heart-racing thrills.

In its existence for three years, my visit was highlighted by the Miss Top 10 finalists, as we accompanied them to explore the beauty and wilderness of Namibia on their excursion. From the moment I arrived at Abenab Lodge, I knew I had stumbled upon something special. The soft rustle of the acacia trees, the golden Namibian sun setting over the bush fields, and the genuine smiles of the lodge team created an atmosphere of pure serenity. The welcoming was made even more special with a cultural performance, echoing the beautiful sounds of the Ovazemba tribesmen. It was not your regular check-in, it felt like a homecoming. The staff and management welcomed me with a refreshing drink and stories of the area's rich mining past. Their warmth set the tone for what would become one of the most memorable escapes I have ever experienced.

Abenab Lodge managed to capture the rare essence of authentic Namibian hospitality, where every guest is treated like a friend and every corner holds a touch of nature's quiet beauty. Breakfast was served with a story telling session of the lodges past and present. The walls adorned by captivating artwork, each explained in detail. With a full belly and yearning for more knowledge, a short walk from the lodge revealed one of Namibia's most fascinating sights: the largest man-made open pit in the country, if not the world felt like a journey through time. Once a bustling mine, the Abenab site now stands as a monumental reminder of Namibia's geological and industrial legacy.

Standing at the edge of the pit, I felt small, surrounded by the echo of history carved into layers of ancient rocks. It is a place that humbles you and sparks curiosity, urging you to imagine the stories buried deep within its depths and ready to take on a soaring adventure over the deep opening, it was time to zip line!

It was an adventure I had only heard of from my now teenager daughter who had braved the leap before me! To zip line across the Abenab pit is not for the faint of heart, but it is an absolute must for anyone seeking a thrill. As I was harnessed in and prepared to take off, a mix of excitement and nervous laughter filled the air along with cheers from the Miss Namibia finalists. Then, with one step I was flying, gliding over the vast crater, wind rushing past my face, the world below unfolding in breath-taking beauty. I felt the rush of freedom as I started to near the end, a sudden need for more! What a fulfilling experience! The feeling was indescribable: part adrenaline, part awe, and wholly unforgettable. Suspended between sky and stone, I saw Namibia from a whole new perspective, wild, powerful, and endlessly beautiful.

Abenab Lodge is not just a stop on a travel itinerary; it is an experience that touches all the senses, more than just a destination, more like a feeling of belonging. From the long familiarization journey to the north, exhaustion kicked in. It was time for relaxing the body, rejuvenating the mind, and refreshing the mind in the unique hydrotherapy spa.

Mornings begin with birdsong and crisp air while the afternoons invite you to explore nature trails or simply relax by the pool with a refreshing drink in hand. Evenings glow with campfire stories and starlit skies that stretch endlessly above, dinner was served on the open flames, a Namibian must to have a braai! The meal was delicious and filled the spaces and hit the spots that most meat lovers crave for!

For couples, families, or solo travellers, the renewable energy powered -Abenab offers something for everyone, comfort wrapped in adventure, peace laced with excitement, and hospitality that feels like home. In a world where so many travel experiences feel curated and commercial, Abenab Lodge remains refreshingly real. It is a place where nature still takes centre stage, where laughter rings louder than phone notifications and you can welcome the calm and break from social media while still capturing its beauty to create content later, and where every visitor leaves a little more connected, not only to the land and to history but also to yourself.

Sometimes, the best treasures are not hidden at all, they are patiently waiting, just off the beaten path, for you to find them and book them!

Thank you for the experience Abenab Lodge! ❖

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What If We Never Tried

*How one small act
sparked a movement
of compassion and
conservation*

story by Dr. Rudie and Marlice van Vuuren, written By N/a'an ku sê | photographs supplied by N/a'an ku sê Foundation Archives





Because the world doesn't change when we plan, it changes when we try.

The story of N/a'an ku sê began on a dusty August morning in 2003, when a San woman arrived at the farmhouse door of Harnas Wildlife Sanctuary. In her arms she carried a baby, frail, silent, and fading fast.

Marlice van Vuuren spoke to her in the San language she had learned as a child and called her husband, Dr. Rudie van Vuuren. The baby was severely malnourished; twice before, rural clinics had missed the diagnosis. The nearest hospital was 150 kilometres away, and no ambulance would come. They drove themselves, and as they reached the hospital doors, the child died in their arms.

That moment changed everything. They could have walked away, but instead they asked a question that would define their future: What if we tried to make sure this never happened again?

Their search for answers led them to Epukiro, where an unused clinic stood forgotten, its equipment still wrapped in plastic. To reclaim the bankrupt building would cost N\$200 000, far beyond their reach.

At the time, Rudie was representing Namibia in both the Rugby and Cricket World Cups. He and Marlice launched a small campaign: for every point or run he scored, people could donate toward reopening the clinic.

Then a Dutch philanthropist, Jan Verburg, visited Namibia. Standing in the silent clinic, he asked, "What do you want to do here?" Rudie replied, "We want to help... for

free." Jan agreed and donated €20 000, enough to open the doors of the Lifeline Clinic.

Each weekend, Rudie and Marlice drove hundreds of kilometres to treat the San community. A year later, Jan funded a nurse, Sr. Anna, to keep the clinic open full-time. For the people of Epukiro, hope had finally found its place.

By 2006, the couple's lives balanced between medicine and Marlice's deep love for wildlife. They found land outside Windhoek where both passions could thrive. With Jan's continued support, they built N/a'an ku sê Lodge and Wildlife Sanctuary, a place where compassion could sustain conservation, and tourism could fund transformation.

From that single act of courage grew a movement that now spans Namibia. The Lifeline Clinic still treats thousands each year; the Wildlife Sanctuary rescues and rehabilitates countless animals. Through projects such as Neuras, Kanaan, TimBila, Harnas, and Lianshulu Lodge, N/a'an ku sê now employs more than 550 people — each one a testament to what happens when people decide to try.

Sometimes Marlice and Rudie still think about that little girl, the child whose short life began this journey. She will never know it, but she changed everything. If they had never tried, there would be no clinic, no sanctuary, no home of second chances.

But they did, and because they did, N/a'an ku sê stands today as a living promise that courage and compassion can change the world. One act of trying at a time.

"This is how trying became a movement." ❖



The Last Word

words by Chris Coetzee

To our readers and clients,
As we reach December, I want to express my deepest gratitude. Your support has carried Michelangelo Magazine into 157 countries, and it is because of you that we were honoured with the Best Luxury Tourism Magazine 2025 and the Client Satisfaction Excellence Award 2025 from London.

But beyond awards and numbers, it's your trust, your readership, and your partnership that truly matter.

Thank you sincerely.

We could not have achieved any of this without you.

For now, it's December, and it is a time when families return, expats fly home, and villages light up.

It is said that by 2050, one in every four people on Earth will be African. By 2100, nearly 40% of the world's population could be African. Cities like Lagos, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Abidjan already grow by 800 – 1,200 people per day.

By 2030, Africa will have 21 megacities – more than the United States and Europe combined.

Africa is also the only continent that is physically moving northwards, drifting toward Europe at roughly 2.5 cm per year. A slow, steady, continental migration.

But while Africa shifts beneath our feet, life in Namibia turns to its own timeless rhythm.

December arrives, and across our vast plains a peculiar ancient ritual begins to unfold: holiday planning. With great enthusiasm and questionable optimism, families map out road trips, braais, and precious bonding time... while conveniently overlooking the small detail that the entire country has now transformed into a giant oven.

By midday, the temperature rises to a level where even

the family dog, usually loyal and emotionally available, refuses eye contact.

Something remarkable happens in this unforgiving heat.

As the mercury climbs far beyond what any reasonable human should endure, an extraordinary transformation occurs.

The Namibian male - normally brave, confident, and full of spirit - now slows down dramatically. The daily migration shrinks to three sacred destinations: the shade, the fridge, and whichever room hosts the strongest air-conditioner, often guarded like a watering hole by territorial uncles.

The Namibian female, equally assaulted by the heat, develops a heightened survival instinct. With elegant precision, she sidesteps unnecessary body contact, particularly anything resembling affection, which in these temperatures could lead to spontaneous combustion.

Above 42°C all romantic behaviour collapses entirely. Hand-holding becomes a high-risk activity.

And yet...

In this shimmering heat, something magical begins to stir.

A whisper of petrichor. A teasing breeze. A fat raindrop hitting dust like a drum.

The rains are coming.

And suddenly - as thunder cracks and the grass begins to glow green - Namibians awaken.

People run outside. Someone shouts, "REËN!" Someone else throws their hands up. Oumas put on the kettle. Uncles crack open beers and begin unsolicited meteorology lessons.

And there, in that charged moment of scent, sound, and relief, the soul softens.

It is in this moment we say EEWA (Oshiwambo, pronounced EH-wah) - I hear you, I understand you, and I welcome you with openness.

EEWA to the rain.

EEWA to the land.

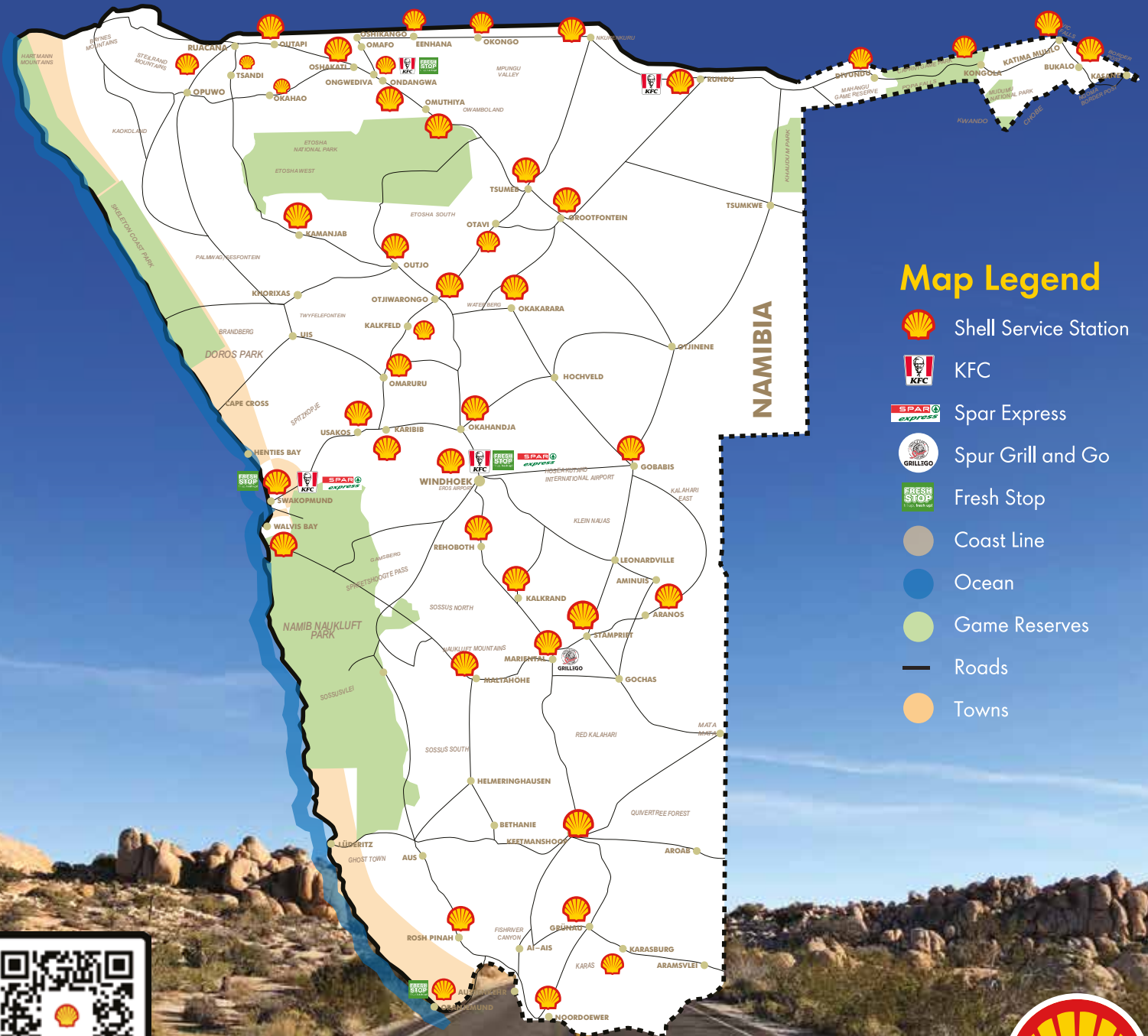
EEWA to our people returning from every corner of the world.

Because then you remember: This is home.

A place of laughter, comfort food, thunderstorms that heal, dust that settles, and a spirit that rises, without fail, every December.

Merry Christmas. ❄️

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