



TAILOR-MADE DESTINATIONS

## **Desert Nights 2015 – Namibia Guided Tour** *20<sup>th</sup> Sept to 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct*



*Are you ready for the adventure of a lifetime?*

*New for 2015, our Desert Nights small group tour accommodates a maximum of six participants and offers you the opportunity to take part in one of sub-Saharan Africa's most exciting adventure sport events—the Desert Knights mountain bike ride—while also enjoying a guided tour of the very best of southern and central Namibia's dramatic landscapes and historic attractions.*

*Your guided tour begins in Windhoek, where you will spend one night before travelling to Sesriem and the sand dunes of Sossusvlei. From here you continue to Aus in southern Namibia, an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century settlement that is rich in First and Second World War history, and then on to the spectacular Fish River Canyon, the second largest in the world, and the starting place for the 2015 Desert Knights mountain bike adventure.*

*The Desert Knights is a six day adventure that sees you travel through the hills and deserts of the stunning Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, on the border with South Africa. You will travel largely by mountain bike, but there will also be a chance to canoe and hike. To avoid the intense heat, the cycling will largely take place in the early morning and evening, with only the moonlight to guide you as you follow the course of the Fish River Canyon and the Orange River.*

*After this thrilling adventure, you will head back north to Windhoek, travelling via the Kalahari Desert and stopping at the iconic Red Dunes Lodge along the way. The final night of your tour will be spent at the wonderful GocheGanas Lodge, situated in a private reserve just outside the capital, where you can enjoy a relaxing massage and a fine three-course dinner!*

### **Your Financial Protection**

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

### Day by day itinerary

#### **20<sup>th</sup> Sept: Windhoek Overnight**

On arrival at Windhoek International Airport you will be met by your guide and driven to your hotel in the city (to be confirmed). The rest of the afternoon is at leisure.



In the evening, join the rest of the group for dinner at a local restaurant, where you will have a chance to get to know each other, as well as to go over the itinerary for the next few days and ask any questions you may have.

#### **21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept: Sossusvlei Area**

You will be met at the hotel this morning and, with the rest of the group, depart Windhoek for Sesriem, travelling in a south-westerly direction. The drive will take approx. 5 hours, and takes you through some truly dramatic landscapes, which range from golden savannah to arid desert. On arrival check into a local hotel (tbc) for dinner and overnight.

The following morning (day 3), wake early and journey into Namib-Naukluft National Park. Your main destination is the famous salt pan of Sossusvlei, where you'll have time to explore its towering sand dunes, the largest of their kind in their world. Your tour will also take in Deadvlei, a huge dry lake studded with centuries-old, yet perfectly preserved, camelthorn trees.



The entrance opens at sunrise and this is undoubtedly the best time of day to see the dunes, so we'll make a point of setting off early. You'll be travelling back during the middle of the day, when the desert can be incredibly hot, so please do remember to pack a good hat, comfortable shoes, and lots of water!

In the afternoon, explore Sesriem Canyon before returning to the lodge.



### **23<sup>rd</sup> Sept: Aus Area**

Depart Sesriem this morning for Aus, a drive of approx. 4 hours. Accommodation in Aus to be confirmed.

Aus is a tiny settlement in southernmost Namibia with a population of not much more than 300. It is situated along the old railway track that links Keetmanshoop and Luderitz. Though small and remote, Aus is rich in history, as a former German outpost and, during WWI, an internment camp. At the heart of the town is a small cemetery, where the bodies of British and German soldiers lie side-by-side.

Also of note, in the region of Aus, is the eerie ghost town of Kolmanskop, with its old colonial-era homes, which were many years ago abandoned to the desert. Perhaps Aus' greatest attraction, however, is its wild horses, stunningly beautiful creatures that have made the desert their home. You might be able to spot them from a distance as they roam the plains freely.



### **24<sup>th</sup> Sept: Fish River Canyon Area – Start Desert Knights 2015**

Today marks the beginning of the Desert Knights bike ride. Leaving Aus early with your guide, you will make your way to Hobas Camp, in the Fish River Canyon, in time to register for the race (between 2 and 4pm).



At 5pm, depart with the other cyclists for the Fish River Canyon viewpoint, where the official welcome and tour brief will take place. You will shortly be returning to the camp at Hobas, but this time by bike.



The moon will have begun to rise above the horizon by the time you and the other cyclists start arriving back at the camp after a 30km cycle. A lively welcome dinner awaits.

Cycle route: 30kms  
Overnight: Hobas Camp, Namibia

### **25<sup>th</sup> Sept: Fish River Canyon (Desert Knights)**

This morning will be spent exploring the region of the Fish River Canyon immediately surrounding the camp, crossing its natural tracks and stopping along the way to admire the view from a number of viewpoints. This is intended as a relaxed ride—you won't venture too far from camp. There's no fixed route; rather, a self-guided route will be outlined and information provided about the landscape encountered around the Canyon.

Return to Hobas Camp late morning for lunch. Rest and or relax by the pool during the midday heat. The main leg of today's ride will commence this afternoon at 5pm, when you will set off from Hobas Campsite and follow a fixed route to Ai Ais Resort.



Expect to arrive at Ai Ais Resort late evening.

Cycle route: 70kms  
Overnight: Ai Ais Resort, Namibia



### **26<sup>th</sup> Sept: Fish River Canyon (Desert Knights)**

This morning and afternoon is free. Relax at Ai Ais Resort, which has two swimming pools and a spa, or spend the day exploring the surrounding landscape on foot (there are short hiking routes). The cycle ride starts in the afternoon.

Today's ride follows an undulating route, with lots of steep hilly sections and long descents. Towards the end of the journey you will venture through a secluded canyon by moonlight. Your campsite for the night is in a dry river bed in the Gamkab Canon—a spectacular location!

Cycle route: 60kms  
Overnight: Gamkab Canyon, Namibia

### **27<sup>th</sup> Sept: Orange River by canoe (Desert Knights)**

An early start today, as you load your bike onto a trailer and head down to the Orange River for a full morning spent on the water in a canoe. After a quick briefing, you'll begin paddling. The route you take today may vary depending on the exact level of the Orange River. Ideally you will be able to paddle approx. 20kms, but the route may have to be shortened if the water levels are low. Either way, you will have the chance to explore one of the most remote regions of the Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park before you reach your campsite at De Hoop.



NB. You will need your passport ready, as to reach De Hoop you involve crossing onto the other side of the Orange River and into South Africa.



Paddling route: 20kms

Overnight: De Hoop Camp, South Africa



### **28<sup>th</sup> Sept: Orange River Area (Desert Knights)**

Again, the morning and early afternoon is at leisure. Relax at De Hoop, go for a swim in the river, or explore the hills on foot.

Your cycle ride begins in the early evening and will see you travel 35kms to Hakkiesdoring, which enjoys a dramatic location in the hills. The mountainous topography will make for tough cycling, but it's worth the effort for the beautiful scenery you will encounter.

Cycle Route: 35kms

Overnight: Hakkiesdoring Camp, South Africa

### **29<sup>th</sup> Sept: Orange River Area (Desert Knights)**

Today is the final day of the cycling tour. You will set off early this morning, crossing the higher ranges of the Richtersveld, into Helsberg Pass, and across the Five Sisters towards Sendelingsdrift. The 60km ride will end on the banks of the Orange River, at Sendelingsdrift Camp. On arrival, settle down for an afternoon of rest, starting perhaps with a swim in the cool river! A final dinner will be take place at the camp, during which photos taken during the event will be displayed on an outdoor projector.



Cycle route: 60kms  
Overnight: Sendelingsdrift Camp, South Africa

**30<sup>th</sup> Sept: Northern Fish River (end of Desert Knights tour)**

Another early start, as you take the ferry from Sendelingsdrift to the Namibian side of the Orange River, where your guide will be waiting to greet you. Begin the journey back to Windhoek, driving north via Aus and Rosh Pinah.

You rest tonight at Alte Kalkofen, a charming, owner-run lodge situated on old farmland, some 90kms from Keetmanshoop, Namibia's southern capital.

**1<sup>st</sup> Oct: Mariental Surrounds**

Continue east along the road to Keetmanshoop via Seeheim, before heading north in the direction of Kalkrand. Shortly before reaching Kalkrand you will stop at Red Dunes Lodge.

Red Dunes Lodge lies on the banks of a vleis and is surrounded by the beautiful sand dunes of the Kalahari. A 120-metre long wooden bridge leads out to the restaurant, bar and reception area, which also includes a sunken pool. Ten permanent tents are nestled on the embankment, spaced far apart to allow for privacy.

From the individual terraces you have a view of the vleis, where you can watch animals which come down to drink in the evenings. Wildlife in this area includes giraffe, nyala, impala, zebra, wildebeest, oryx, springbuck and eland.

The afternoon is at leisure. There are a range of activities available at Red Dunes, from morning and evening 4x4 game drives, guided walks, and a tour of the devil's claw plantation, where medicinal plants are grown.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Oct: Windhoek Surrounds**

Depart Red Dunes this morning and drive approx. 3 hours in the direction of Windhoek, stopping just south of the capital and checking into GocheGanas Lodge.

GocheGanas is a small, luxury lodge situated in its own private 15,000 acre nature reserve, a short distance from Windhoek. It enjoys an enviable location on top of a high hill, overlooking a spectacular, semi-desert landscape. It offers just sixteen private chalets, all situated on a high hill and enjoying spectacular views of the semi-arid desert landscape surrounding them.

GocheGanas also features a fully equipped spa and wellness centre. A massage treatment is included in your stay—the perfect end to an active tour!

The rest of the afternoon is at leisure. You can choose from a number of outdoor activities, ranging from guided walks to 4x4 drives, or simply relax by the pool. In the evening enjoy a fine dinner in the stylish dining room to mark the end of your tour.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct: Departure

Today you will be transferred to the airport for your return flight home.

#### Price Guide:

*The cost of this itinerary is from **£2,495 per person** based on twin/double accommodation and subject to availability at the time of booking. This is a fixed departure scheduled for Sept 2015, and will accommodate a maximum of six participants. For more information, or if you would like to enquire about a tailor-made holiday combining part or all of the above itinerary, please [contact us](#).*

#### Includes:

- Twin/double accommodation as outlined in itinerary
- Experienced guide for duration of tour
- Emergency hospitalisation cover (you should also have your own travel insurance)
- Tourism levy and park fees
- Medical support during Desert Knights

#### Excludes:

- International flights – please ask us for a quote
- Visas
- Bike hire
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips
- Lunch to own account on days 1-4 and 11-13