

Adventures with Abenteuer Afrika

The first leg of our trip began with a 240km drive on gravel road to Rostock Ritz Desert Lodge, situated in the heart of the **Namib Desert**. Arriving at the lodge, we were greeted by Maja, the resident hand-reared Mountain Zebra. After check-in, and freshening up, we relaxed with a Sundowner on the terrace, watching the sun set over a stunning landscape. Warm hospitality, coupled with hearty, well-prepared cuisine set the tone for a memorable experience.

After dinner, we gathered to review checklists which include vehicle, gear and map inspections - as well as discussing expectations with fellow explorers!

Morning broke with a crisp clarity that only the desert air can conjure. After a 20min drive we entered the **Namib Naukluft Park**.



Our guide briefed us on driving conditions and rules of the road:

Always follow his track – no if, ands, or buts! –

We let air out of the tires and with the imposing red dunes in the distance, we set off. It soon becomes clear... this is not for the faint-hearted.

As the trail progressed, our driving skills were amply tested. It was, after all, a track originally meant for the ox wagons of the early settlers, as well as for the German "Schutztruppe" of the late 1800s. It took them many weeks to complete, and some never made it.

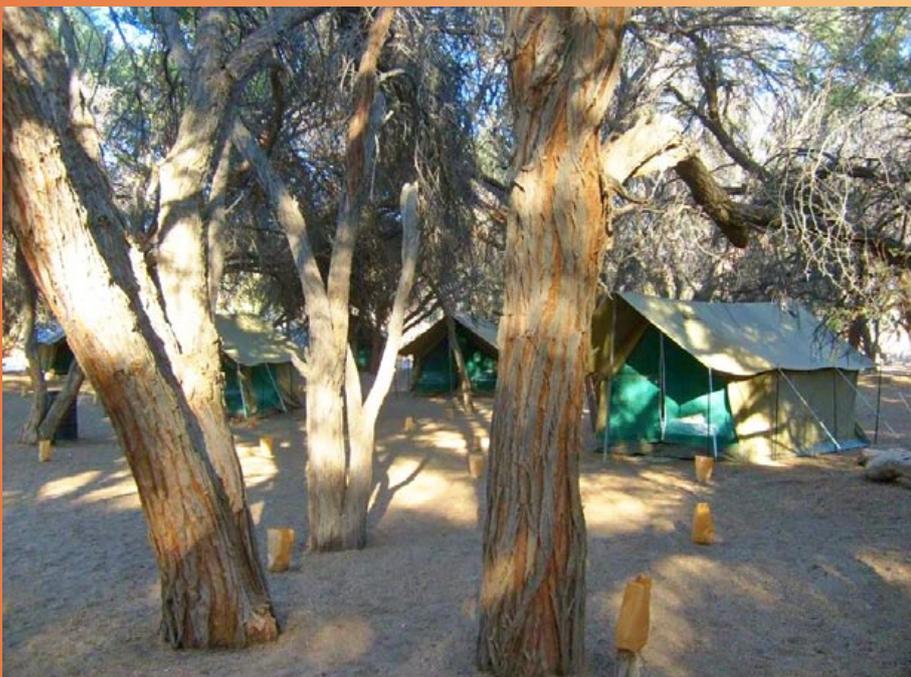
Each driver must manage the fine line between keeping the vehicle

from becoming mired in the sand and becoming distracted while admiring absolutely jaw-dropping scenery. Yellow-green grass covering rusty red dunes dotted with Gemsbok, Zebra, Springbok and Ostrich.



Gradually the landscape changed and the vehicles entered the dune streets. Wave upon wave of massive dunes tested the skills (or lack of...) of the drivers. With shouts (of fear!) and cheers (of relief!) each dune was ridged... but sometimes NOT! Time and again our guide turned back, find a way around or over a dune to give advice or tow a vehicle (read driver!) of its misery.

When it seemed the scenery could not get more imposing, the lead vehicle stopped on the edge of a canyon. Hundreds of meters below lay the Kuiseb Riverbed, where a lunch fit for Kings was set out under a Camelthorn tree.



After lunch and driver change, the convoy set off to the BIG dunes. Each new dune set off a new bout of shrieks gasps and toe-curls. Eventually the canyon edge was reached, and we followed it until a break was found to cross the Kuiseb river. A few miles on and the campsite near Homeb is reached. Stories of daring driving ended the night around the campfire.

The following morning the vehicles were checked before we set out on the gravel road to Walvis Bay. The views now changed from moonlandscape-esque canyons to vast open gypsum gravel plains passing several Topnaar settlements en-route.

Arriving back in 'civilization', a feeling of accomplishment set in. It was great to be in total control of one's own destiny

in the dunes, with no one else around and no one to interfere with the adventure. Entering Swakopmund, this magical quaint town is entrancing. After checking in at the Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre for a quick fresh-up, we all set of to the Brauhaus for a hearty German lunch accompanied by welcome draughts of one of Namibia's most beloved exports: Windhoek Lager. Cheers!

