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HOME

ABOUT ▾

TOP 10 ▾

HOTELS ▾

FLIGHTS ▾

DESTINATIONS ▾

TRAVEL TIPS ▾

TRAVEL CONTESTS

BLOG

RECENT POSTS

Review: Onguma The Fort, Etosha National Park

SEARCH ...

HOME > TOP 10 LISTS > Top 10 best things to see & do in Namibia

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Top 10 best things to see & do in Namibia

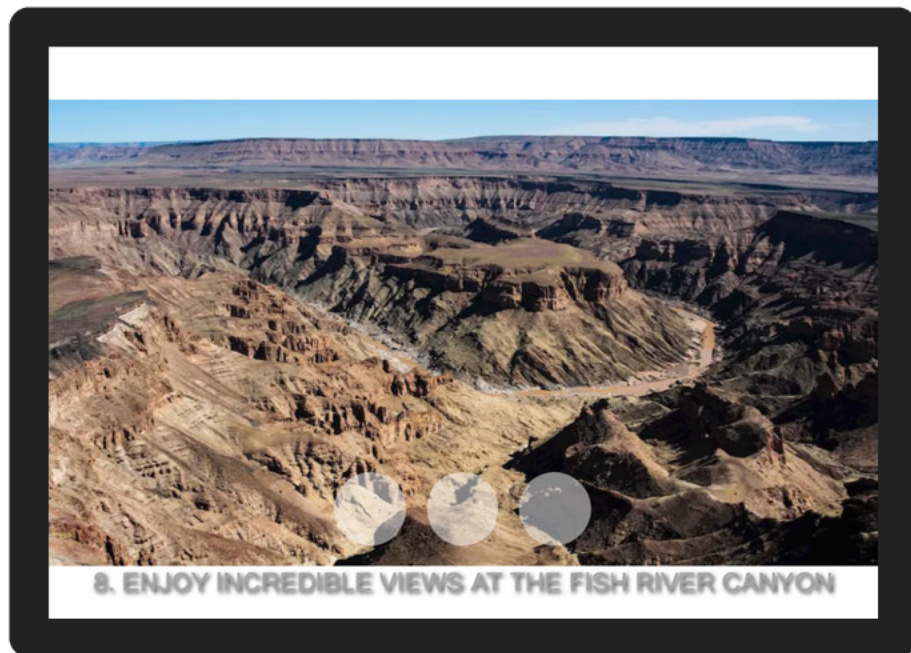
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Monday newsletters always feature top 10 travel lists to inspire.

Today: Top 10 best things to see & do in Namibia

The Southern African country of Namibia is celebrated for its lunar-like landscapes – an abundance of space in which to inhale deeply and bask in an infinite supply of sun-bright blue skies and star-filled nights. Its immensity of space – it is the fifth largest country in Africa – is accentuated by the fact that it is also the second least densely populated country in the world, second only to Mongolia. It covers a vast area of 825,400 sq km (318,700 sq mi) yet has a population of just 2.1 million – an average of two people per sq km – which leaves space for a mind-boggling amount of nothing. Bordered to the east by the Kalahari Desert and to the west, by the South Atlantic Ocean, Namibia offers breathtaking scenery, a lengthy natural coastline, a wealth of African wildlife, expansive deserts and towering mountains. Here's my top 10 list of the best things to see & do in Namibia.

There is more information below the slideshow. What's your favorite thing to see or do in Namibia? Leave a **comment** below.



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10. BE ADVENTUROUS IN SWAKOPMUND

Situated centrally along the Atlantic coastline of Namibia, Swakopmund is the main town through which most tourists traveling in Namibia have to pass on their journey, as the town links travel routes from Etosha National Park in the north, the capital Windhoek in the east and the famous dunes of Sossusvlei in the south. So, it's an ideal place to relax after a few exciting days in the desert and wash off the sand. The charming town retains a strong German flavor – from its cobbled, palm-lined streets and picturesque buildings to typical German restaurants and pubs. The town has become Namibia's leading adrenaline destination and offers a wide range of activities like sandboarding, quad biking and 4x4 driving in the dunes. If that's not your cup of tea, you can also enjoy boat excursions to look for seals and dolphins or simply sample some of the finely-brewed local beer and renowned Swakopmund fare such as fish, lobster and the utterly delicious Swakopmund oysters.

- **Recommended hotel:** [Strand Hotel Swakopmund](#) & [Giardino Boutique Hotel](#)

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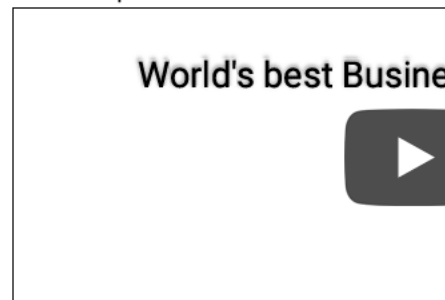
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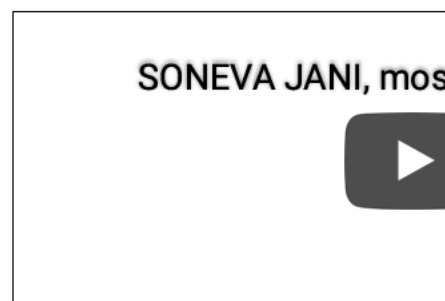
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9. VISIT KOLMANSKOP, A GHOST TOWN IN THE DESERT

Situated only 15 km (10 mi) east of the harbor town of Lüderitz, Kolmanskop used to be a small railway station until a railway worker found shiny stones in 1912: diamonds. It did not take long before hordes of prospectors descended on the area and a real town sprung up, producing a million carats a year or almost 12% percent of the world's total diamond production. During this diamond boom, Kolmanskop became one of the richest towns in Africa: there was a casino, school, hospital, ice factory, and a theater (European opera groups even came to perform). Kolmanskop's inhabitants were becoming rich overnight simply picking diamonds off the desert floor, but the wealth wasn't to last as intensive mining depleted the area by the 1930s and the town was left to the harsh desert conditions. Today, Kolmanskop is a ghost town and a popular tourist attraction, not only offering a fascinating insight into the lives of its former inhabitants, but also any photographer's dream.



8. ENJOY INCREDIBLE VIEWS AT THE FISH RIVER CANYON

The Fish River Canyon in southern Namibia is the second largest canyon in the world, after the Grand Canyon in the United States of America. This giant canyon is some 160 km (100 mi) long, up to 27 km (17 mi) wide, and up to 550 m (1800 ft) deep. The canyon was eroded by the Fish River, the longest interior river in Namibia which cuts deep into the plateau, which today is dry, stony and sparsely covered with hardy drought-resistant plants. The Fish River Canyon commences at Seeheim, at the lower course of the river and ends at Ai Ais, where the river flows into the Orange River, the border to South Africa. In the rainy season, the pools are normally filled with water. During the arid summer months, the river bed is either completely dry or has just some puddles left. There is a 5-day hike through the canyon (one of Africa’s most popular multi-day hikes), but visitors can also simply take in the spectacular panoramas only from several view points (the views are especially beautiful around sunrise and sunset).

- **Recommended hotel:** [Fish River Lodge](#)



7. JOURNEY TO THE HIMBA HOMELAND

Few places on Earth offer encounters with tribal people living as they have for centuries, but Namibia is one of them. The Himba people are a tribe once part of the Herero, migrating south from the Great Lakes in the sixteenth century and acquiring the name ‘Himba’, meaning ‘beggar’, in the nineteenth when an epidemic killed off most of their cattle and left them destitute. For much of their history they have had to scrape together an existence, turning semi-nomadic in order to survive. Today they number roughly 50 000, spread across

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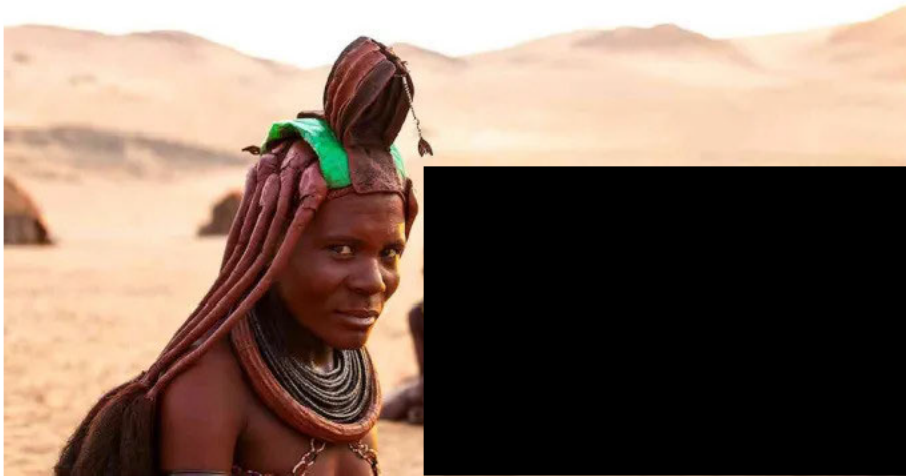
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northern Namibia and Angola. They live much the same as they always have, tending their livestock, prizing their cattle, communing with their ancestors around a central holy fire. The women doing much of the heavy lifting, domestic work, child minding, cooking, and the men taking the livestock out to graze, often for weeks at a time. Meeting the Himba is a highlight for those lucky enough to visit the country's remote, northernmost area.

- **Recommended hotel:** [Serra Cafema Camp by Wilderness Safaris](#)



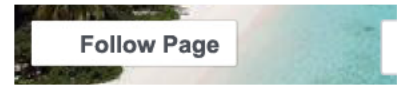
6. SPOT WILDLIFE IN ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK

Etosha is Namibia's most famous National Park and represents a unique wilderness area in Africa. The park's main characteristic is a salt pan so large it can be seen from space. Yet there is abundant wildlife that congregates around the waterholes, giving travelers almost guaranteed game sightings. Lion, elephant, leopard, giraffe, cheetah, hyena, springbok, two kinds of zebra, eland and many more species of wildlife are found here. At the same time Etosha is one of the most accessible game reserves in Africa, as the park is malaria free and accessible for regular cars. During winter the Etosha Pan is bone dry. This is also the time when most of the visitors come to the park as the climate is mild and the wildlife concentrates itself at the waterholes. The summer in the park is vastly different with heavy rains turning a dry dusty Etosha National Park into a lush green oasis; this is the best time in to year means to spot new born animals as well as birdlife.

- **Recommended hotel:** [Onguma The Fort & Little Ongava](#)



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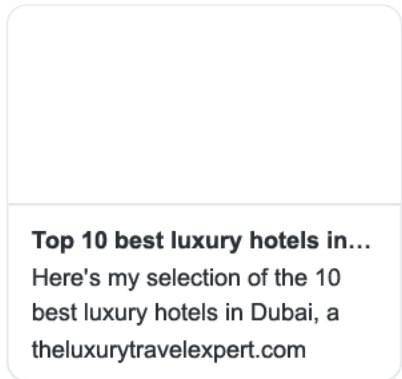
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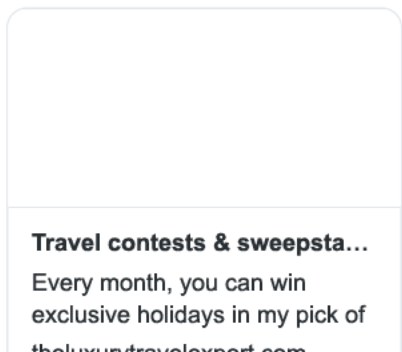


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5. EXPLORE DAMARALAND

One of Africa's most dramatic wilderness areas, Damaraland in northern Namibia features a spectacular desert landscape, ranging from the glorious rock formations in the south to rugged scenery in the north. Flat-topped mountains, wind sculpted sandstone cliffs, and deep gorges indicate a wetter past. Today, the rivers – mainly the Huab, Ugab and Koigab – flow only sporadically: their riverbeds are ribbon-like oases that push through the most desolate of terrains, with the underground water and tree lined courses allowing even large species like desert-adapted elephant and giraffe to roam the seemingly inhospitable region. Away from the river lines are vast open plains that in good rainfall years are covered by annual grasses, attracting herds of specialist arid-adapted antelope such as oryx and springbok. In the heart of Damaraland lies Twyfelfontein, which harbors some of Southern Africa's finest and most famous prehistoric rock art (mostly depicting animals).

- **Recommended hotel:** [Damaraland Camp by Wilderness Safaris](#)

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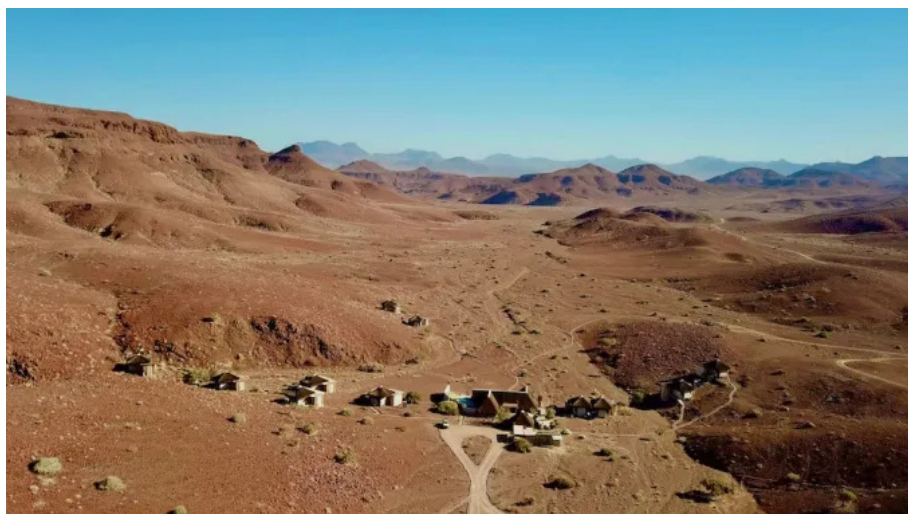
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4. STAY AT A LUXURY HOTEL

Namibia is home to some of the most fabulous hotels on earth, most of them linked to conservation projects that protect the often fragile natural environment and the people that live in it. Luxury accommodation in Namibia takes full advantage of the country's greatest asset: the mind-blowing natural beauty all around. Although there is a truly astounding array of hotels, camps and lodges to choose from, the country's most exclusive and best luxury hotels are managed by just three hotel groups: **& Beyond**, **Wilderness Safaris** and **Zannier Hotels**. I recommend visiting at least four or five lodges to experience the incredible variety of Namibia's hotel scene and the diversity of its landscape. No matter what itinerary you choose for your holiday in Namibia, make sure the following three spectacular hotels are part of it: Zannier Hotels Sonop, &Beyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, and Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp by Wilderness Safaris.

&Beyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge (Namibia) | PH



3. CLIMB THE DUNES IN SOSSUVLEI & DEADVLEI

One of the most pristine and desolate wilderness areas on earth, the otherworldly beauty of the mighty Namib Desert has to be seen to be believed. Formed a mind-boggling 55 million years ago, the mighty Namib Desert is believed to be the oldest desert on the planet (the Sahara is thought to be just two to seven million years old). The Namib boasts some of the world's tallest sand dune formations, some of them reaching nearly 400 m (1300 ft) in height in an area called Sossusvlei. Here, you can pick countless dunes of differing heights to climb, although most travelers flock to the highest peak – the Big Daddy dune – as well as Dune 45 – the closest dune to the park entrance – to watch the sun rise over the magical landscape of cascading dunes in all their glory. At the foot of Big Daddy is the hauntingly beautiful Deadvlei, or 'dead marsh', a picture perfect, yet haunting, graveyard of camelthorn trees skeletons that reach up out of the cracked earth.

- **Recommended hotel:** [&Beyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge](#) & [Little Kulala by Wilderness Safaris](#)



2. VISIT THE SKELETON COAST

Few attractions are as evocative and atmospheric as the haunting Skeleton Coast. Situated on Namibia's remote western coastline, it is named after the many ships that sank here over the past few centuries. The rusted remains of wrecked ships are often surrounded by swirling mists and make for moody and dramatic visuals with the endlessly crashing shoreline as a background. The Skeleton Coast is also home to one of the world's largest breeding colonies of Cape fur seals. The best place to stay at the Skeleton Coast is the fabulous Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp by Wilderness Safaris, which organizes 4X4 day excursions to the windswept coast, hereby driving across the wild Hoanib River floodplain and stopping at an often wildlife-rich oasis en route. After the excursion and a picnic on the beach, a short flight takes you back to camp – offering a nearly infinite view of a landscape like no other. The trip to the Skeleton Coast with Wilderness Safaris is the most spectacular hotel excursion I've ever done.

- **Recommended hotel:** [Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp by Wilderness Safaris](#)



1. SOAR IN A HOT AIR BALLOON OVER THE DESERT

If you want to ponder how insignificant we really are, then hop into a hot air balloon and quietly absorb the unparalleled bird's eye views of Namibia's phenomenal landscape. One of the best places for a hot air balloon flight is the Namib desert, where Namib Sky Balloon Safaris has been operating for the last 25 years without any accident or incident. Awake just before dawn and venture out to the launch site, then float up peacefully into the sky as the sun rises. Enjoy spectacular views of jagged mountain tops that emerge from shifting dunes and soar over a landscape that has remained untouched for millions of years. After a gentle landing, as is customary with any balloon flight, an "Out Of Africa" style Champagne breakfast is set up in the middle of nowhere. Your pilot will also present you with a flight certificate before you take a leisurely nature drive back to the meeting point I cannot recommend it enough as it was one of the most incredible, soul-enriching and humbling travel experiences in my life.

- **Official website:** [Namib Sky Balloon Safaris](#)