



FAQs



Welcome to the frequently asked questions document, if you can't find the answer to a question or if you have any other questions, please feel free to email me at info@afrioperations.com

Do we need a 4x4 vehicle to drive in Namibia?

You should definitely rent a 4x4 in Namibia. Most rural roads in Namibia are gravel, but there are a few tar roads as well. If you travel from Windhoek to Swakopmund, or from Windhoek to Etosha National Park, you can do it with a regular car. Etosha roads are gravel, but you can – in principle – drive there with a regular vehicle (check with the car rental company first). You will be missing a lot of Namibia, however, if you decide to stay on tar roads only. Actually, you will be missing the most beautiful places, so don't make this mistake. If you are serious about exploring Namibia, you will need a 4x4. Here are a few examples of the famous places you cannot get to without a 4x4 vehicle (or a plane, but I assume you are driving): Sossusvlei, Damaraland and UNESCO site of Twyfelfontein, Fish River Canyon,...

What insurance option should I take?

Opt for full coverage insurance. This will make your trip much more relaxing and enjoyable.

Do I need a children's car seat

While children's car seats are not required in Namibia, they are highly recommended. Renting children's car seat is not very expensive and it is especially helpful as the kids will be able to sit higher and see more of the wildlife.

Information on spare tyres and fuel?

If you do one of the most popular road trips in Namibia (Etosha, Damaraland, Sossusvlei, and/or Fish River Canyon), you should reserve a second spare tyre for your car as tyre puncture is very common in Namibia. Some people have two or even three in one day while some others spend weeks and drive thousands of kilometres without any problems whatsoever. But you better be prepared because you can be really stuck in the middle of nowhere otherwise. If you travel through even more remote areas (e.g. North of Palmwag, or the coast between Luderitz and Walvis Bay) you may want to take three spare tyres with you, and also a couple of extra fuel cans. Leaving regular tourist roads is probably not the best idea for individual travellers. I would advise traveling in a group of at least 2-3 vehicles or booking a guided tour if you want to visit truly remote places.

Can we camp anywhere in the country?

No, you have to use only designated camping sites. I also do not recommend wild camping.

How large is a roof top tent? (tents on the roof of the cars)

The size of a standard rooftop tent is: 1.2m wide, 2.4m long, 1.3m high.

Do rental companies have a minimum rental duration?

Most self-drive 4x4 rental companies have a minimum rental period of 6 days.

Can I rent a driver for my self-drive vehicle?

Yes! Most self-drive 4x4 rental companies do offer driver's to accompany some of their clients. While this does not happen very often, it is available.

Which side of the road do you drive on in Namibia?

On the left hand side of the road.

What are the Road Conditions like?

Highways exist from Windhoek to all major towns. Asphalt roads extend to most of the borders (except Mata Mata, Klein Manasse, Velloorsdrift and Tsumkwe). Main roads are in good condition and are maintained to all weather standards. At least 80% of the roads in Namibia are gravel roads and are generally very well maintained. Please always remember to stay within the speed limit on gravel roads.

Hazards

Travel at low speeds when on gravel roads in order to minimize the danger of skidding and overturning. Please exercise caution when overtaking other vehicles as dust reduces visibility. Keep headlights on during the day and night. Salt roads are slippery in foggy conditions. Keep a lookout for road signs that warn of wild animals, as Kudu and Warthog often run across the road without warning. Avoid driving at night or drive slowly as wild animals can be frightened by headlights.

Fuel

Towns are far apart so guests are urged to fill up appropriately at filling stations. Keep in mind that distances given on maps are estimates. The further north you travel, the fewer filling stations there is. Most filling stations are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but smaller places may close for the night and even over the weekend, so fill up at every opportunity and carry extra fuel and oil just in case if you plan to travel to remote areas.

What are the Drivers License Requirements?

A driver's license from any country with a photograph and that is in English or has an authentic English language certificate attached to it is accepted in Namibia. If your driver's license does not meet these requirements, an international driving permit may be used.

Can we stay in Etosha Park during the night outside of the camps?

No, you have to stay inside the camps: Okaukuejo, Namutoni or Halali. You are also not allowed to leave your car while driving in the park.

When does rainy season start?

Normally it starts in late October-November and lasts till March-April.

Are credit cards acceptable in Namibia?

Yes, in many places, but please make sure with a particular accommodation establishment or service provider booked.

What is the best time to visit Namibia?

If you like to see game the best time is dry season: June-September. It is also cooler season.

What is the time zone of Namibia?

GMT +2.

What is the Capital of Namibia?

Windhoek is Namibia's capital and is centrally situated.

What is the weather and climate like?

Namibia has a subtropical climate, characterized by hot and dry weather with little rain along the coast. Periods of winter drought alternate with summer rainfall between October and March with the interior having higher rainfall.

When should I visit Namibia?

Namibia is a year round destination but Peak season is from July to November. Bear in mind that if you are planning to visit in December/January it gets very warm.

What currency should I use?

The official currency of Namibia is the Namibian Dollar (N\$), divided into 100 cents. The Namibian Dollar and South African Rand are the only currencies accepted in Namibia. Traveler's cheques in Rands are accepted. Foreign currency can be converted into Namibian Dollars or South African Rands at commercial banks and bureau de change.

How much should I Tip?

It is customary to give 10% of the bill in restaurants if service received is of a good standard. Porters should receive about N\$5.00 – N\$10.00 and a petrol station attendant about N\$10.00.

Is Namibia a safe destination?

Namibia is a peaceful country overall. It is considered to be one of the most stable and safe countries on the African continent. However like any country, tourists can be targeted. Pickpockets can be a problem and don't make yourself a target i.e. have your camera hanging around your neck — rather place your goods in a secure bag or backpack. Be alert and use some common sense and you should be fine. If you want to visit a township, do so in a group and with someone who is familiar with the area.

Is Namibia a child and family friendly destination?

Yes, Namibia is a safe country and often regarded as a great place not only for first time travelers to Africa but also for families. Most of the accommodation establishments cater for families and a lot of the activities on offer cater for families and children. The infrastructure is good, water is generally safe to drink and there is plenty to keep everyone of all ages occupied.

What is the Country Dialling Code of Namibia?

The Namibian country dialing code is +264. Each city or region has a 2 digit area code.

Cell/mobile phone use in Namibia?

Mobile phones are common in Namibia and use the same frequency as Europe and the rest of Africa. One is able to purchase a starter kit from the local Cell phone service provider (e.g. MTC). These are widely available from supermarkets and fuel stations. You would then need to purchase air time as and when you need it.

Is internet connectivity widely available?

Most of the accommodation establishments now offer free WI-FI for their guests. There are also internet cafes in Windhoek, Swakopmund and other towns.

What plugs and power voltage is used in Namibia?

The voltage in Namibia is 220-230 V (identical to South Africa). Most supermarkets sell adapters.

What is the food like?

Namibia does have a few strange items on the menu as with many countries in the world. Don't worry too much though, those are not the only options available. Namibia offers a great selection of steaks and game dishes and hamburgers are widely available. A wide variety of seafood is also available as Namibia borders the Atlantic Ocean which is rich in sea life. If you are vegetarian you will be pleased to know that more and more of the local restaurants and accommodation establishments cater for vegetarians.

Should we book in advance?

Many places in Namibia are very remote and accommodation can be limited. Family rooms are very hard to find, so it's really advisable to book well in advance if you are traveling with children or if your dates are not flexible. This is especially the case in Etosha where travel agencies block lots of rooms a year in advance. It's often easier to book this type of accommodation through a travel agent.

North- or South-bound itinerary in Namibia?

Sometimes it can be best to plan your itinerary in such a way that you go to Etosha towards the end of the trip. You'll appreciate all the other places much more if you haven't first been spoiled by the Etosha safari experience. Self-Drive route #3 (in the bonus section) is a perfect example of such an itinerary.

Namibia medical information

There is practically no malaria in Namibia (except in the very North of the country) and you don't need yellow fever vaccination either. If you travel to Namibia in the dry season (April-November) and don't go further North than Etosha, you don't really need to worry about malaria. Check before you travel in case the situation has changed and make sure you are okay with the regular immunizations (tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, measles, polio, hepatitis...). While travelling in Namibia you will often be at least half a day's driving distance from the nearest doctor or pharmacy, so travel well prepared. Most lodges are foreseen to provide first aid if needed, but it's wise to carry any medication you think you might need with you and to take a basic first aid kit with you.

Preparing your Namibia trip itinerary

There is a lot to see in Namibia and the distances are big, so you have to do some thorough research before booking your trip. If you are self-driving and covering a fair bit of the country, make sure you know exactly what you expect to see and do each day. Good planning is essential so that you don't spend too many hours driving and have enough time to see all those incredible places. Make sure you always have some spare time for unforeseen circumstances or just to be able to stop and smell the roses along the way. This is figurative, of course, you will not see roses in the Namibian desert. But you will see plenty of wildlife and amazing landscapes, and you will regret having to pass on it because of the time pressure.

Sometimes long driving days are unavoidable if you want to see a lot of different places in one trip. Just make sure your whole trip is not spent sitting in the car.

Days are short and you cannot travel in the dark so plan your itinerary accordingly. 4-5 hours driving time is about the maximum you should plan in one day. Take into account that you cannot drive fast on gravel roads. 80km/h is about the maximum speed, often you will have to drive much slower than that. You can never know in advance as a lot depends on the condition of the gravel.

Also note that most lodges organise all kinds of activities like safari rides and sundowners in the late afternoon so make sure you reach your next lodge in time if you want to join. You can inform in advance if there is any special activity that you are interested in, but generally they will not leave for the evening safari before 3pm, and most sundowners start even later.

Do I need travel insurance?

Good travel insurance will give you peace of mind and is very important.

How much time do I need to see Windhoek?

You don't need much time to visit Windhoek. Anywhere from half a day to one day is sufficient. Better spend the first and the last nights of your trip at one of the many lodges outside the city. You will be glad you did!

Should you stay in Walvis Bay or in Swakopmund?

Obviously! The two places are just a short ride from each other, and so I would advice visiting Walvis Bay, but staying in Swakopmund for a few days.

Walvis Bay has a big colony of wild flamingos and the whale watching trips also depart from there, but it's more a town to live in than to visit. How should I put it? Swakopmund is more touristic, has a nice downtown area, beautiful buildings, lots of restaurants and hotels, a nice beach... It just feels more like a vacation place. For me it's by far the nicest town in Namibia. Most excursions and day trips also leave from Swakopmund.

How much time do you need in Swakopmund?

Swakopmund is the perfect base for various day trips and excursions. As a part of a road trip, I would plan at least 3 nights in Swakopmund. That gives you time to do a couple of day trips in the area. Also, staying in a town with all kind of facilities is a welcome break from traveling in the desert for days and days. There are plenty of dining options, many shops, banks, doctors... For us it felt a bit like an oasis in the desert.



Any practical tips?

- It's wise to always carry drinking water and some food with you.
- Most lodges offer to prepare a lunch pack for you upon request, but often you have to ask for it in the evening, so don't forget. Alternatively, stop at the supermarket before you leave the town and stock up on water and some food that stays good for a couple of days. Taking a cool bag (as mentioned in the Ultimate What to Pack Guide) with you will give you lots of flexibility on the road.
- Food and activities are relatively cheap in Namibia and especially now because the Rand is very weak and so you get more value for your money.

Interested in photography?

You will need two types of photo lenses in Namibia – wide for the landscapes and tele lenses for the wildlife. You should probably take lenses that cover 10-400mm range. Don't forget the extra batteries and a battery charger, sufficient memory cards, and a tripod. Buying batteries outside the cities seems to be a big issue in Namibia, so make sure you stock up on batteries in advance.

This FAQ document will be updated frequently!