

19 Day Cape Town to Victoria Falls – Desert Tracker

Tour overview

A safari which will take you through the very diverse landscapes of southern Africa. From the barren desert to the cold Atlantic coastline, from thriving game parks to wild savannah and the roaring Victoria Falls.

Highlights

Fish River Canyon, Namibia
Namib Naukluft Park, Namibia
Swakopmund, Namibia
Etosha National Park, Namibia
Windhoek, Namibia
Okavango Delta, Botswana
Chobe National Park, Botswana
Victoria Falls

Meals

18 Breakfasts, 14 Lunches, 14 Dinners

Accommodation

Camping in 2-person dome tents

Day 1 Cape Town, Western Cape, Gariep River

Our overland safari begins in cosmopolitan Cape Town, overlooked by Table Mountain and bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, one of the world's most picturesque cities. Before we leave the city we take a tour of the Cape Flats – Cape Town's famous townships, visiting some of the local people and community projects in the area. The townships illustrate both South Africa's tumultuous history and its hope for the future and make a fascinating visit. From here we head north through South Africa's western and northern Cape provinces, a fertile area of winelands and wild flowers in the south that gradually turns drier and rockier as we head north towards the Namibian border. We set up our camp tonight at Gariep (Orange) River before sunset. There will be time tonight to settle in to life on the road, properly meet the rest of the group and enjoy our first night under the big African sky.

Day 2 – 5 Fish River Canyon, Namib Naukluft Park

We enter Namibia and arrive at the awesome Fish River Canyon. One of the natural wonders of Africa, some 500m deep and over 160km long, this is the second largest canyon in the world (after the Grand Canyon, USA). Again, there are plenty of opportunities for keen photographers as we spend time around this area and visit the canyon's infamous sharp river bend known as 'Hell's Corner.' After a night near the canyon we continue north until we reach the Namib Naukluft Park, containing the world's oldest desert and the highest sand dunes. Some of Sossusvlei's dunes are over 300m high and a popular activity here is to trek to the top of one of them in time to watch the sun rise over the open desert. A spectacular sight but be warned, it's an energy sapping climb to the top! Another well worthwhile option is to continue deeper into the park for a nature walk across the salt pans and valley floor, amidst the dunes – a real glimpse of Namibia's unspoilt natural environment. Bring your camera - the shifting colours of the desert as the sun climbs throughout the mid/late morning offer some brilliant photographic opportunities.



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Day 6 – 7

Swakopmund

Continuing on, we drive out of the desert and hit the Atlantic coast at Swakopmund, a small town redolent of Namibia's colonial past but with modern adventure oriented attractions for the visitor. Swakopmund is Namibia's main seaside resort, sandwiched neatly between the desert and the ocean, and is a delightful coastal oasis. Try some adventure desert based activities if you wish –quad biking, sand boarding, skydiving (weather permitting) – or else simply walk along the promenade admiring the ocean and indulge in the town's café culture.

Day 8

Spitzkoppe

We leave Swakopmund and continue north. Leaving the Cape we turn inland to the beautiful Damaraland region and stop at Spitzkoppe to admire ancient bushman paintings still visible on the peculiar rock formations.

Day 9 – 11

Etosha National Park, Windhoek

We make our way north to Etosha National Park, a vast reserve of over 20,000 sq km surrounding a central salt depression or 'pan.' The pan is seasonally full of water but specially managed waterholes sustain some 114 mammal and 340 bird species. We spend two nights here, usually making camp near a floodlit waterhole. Observers frequently see a range of night visitors including elephant, giraffe, zebra, even lion and hyena, making it one of the most memorable wildlife encounters in Namibia. After two nights we leave Etosha and turn south to the Windhoek, the capital, a city steeped in German architecture and atmosphere. Take the opportunity to enjoy a night out at one of the local taverns!

Day 12 – 17

Ghanzi, Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park

Leaving Windhoek we travel west into the Kalahari region and cross into Botswana. Our first stop is at the town of Ghanzi. Here, in this midst of (seemingly) barren terrain we meet the Bushman and have a guided bush walk for a glimpse of this ancient people's way of life. We stay the night nearby before continuing north to Maun for our next national park - the Okavango Delta. The Okavango is a natural wetland spreading over some 1,600,000ha of northern Botswana. The Okavango River rises in Angola (farther to the north) and flows south dividing repeatedly after crossing into Botswana to form an intricate floodplain of channels and which spreads out into a broad flat inland delta – the only one of its kind. Here we explore amongst the giant lily pads, tall grasses and labyrinthine channels in search of hippo, crocodile and a variety of birds. We travel on foot and by mokoro (dugout canoe) and camp for a night on one of the river islands. The Okavango is a very unspoilt area and camping out amidst the bush and the rivers listening to sounds of the African night is an unforgettable experience!

After our return to Maun we make our way to the northern corner of Botswana to Chobe National Park, home to elephant, lion, buffalo, hippo and abundant birdlife, including the famous African fish eagle. Rising early we take a game drive, we rest during in the heat of the day and then in the late afternoon, we take a cruise on the Chobe River – a great opportunity to see hippo and perhaps elephant or buffalo coming to the river to bathe and drink.

Day 18 – 19

Livingstone, Victoria Falls

Moving on from Chobe we take the ferry across the Zambezi River to Zambia and drive the short distance to the small town of Livingstone. We set up camp at the Waterfront campsite on the banks of the Zambezi, just a few kilometres from the Victoria Falls. The campsite reception will give advice and information about the various optional activities available in the area (typically these include rafting, canoeing, bungee, abseiling, gorge swinging, elephant and horse riding, scenic flights, river cruises), allowing you to plan your time accordingly. But whatever you do, don't forget a visit to the Victoria Falls themselves. At various times of year the spray from the Falls can be seen from up to 20 or 30 kilometres away, hence the local name 'Mosi au Tunya' – the 'smoke that thunders'.

The tour ends after breakfast on day 19.



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NB For the sake of practicality, meals in the Livingstone/Victoria Falls area are restricted to breakfasts. This allows you to take on half day or full day activities (some of which include lunch) without having to be back with the group at mealtimes. The Waterfront camp restaurant overlooks the Zambezi River and offers a good selection of reasonably priced meals and snacks throughout the day (allow US\$15 -\$30 per meal). Relax and enjoy these few days at your own leisure. Alternatively, take a taxi into Livingstone to try local fare.

Includes

- * Fully equipped safari vehicle
- * Camping and cooking equipment
- * All road tolls and vehicle taxes
- * All ground transportation
- * Sleeping mattress
- * Meals as indicated
- * Services of two crew
- * Bushmen paintings visit

Excludes

- * Local Payment excursions
- * Visas
- * Travel insurance
- * Flights
- * Departure taxes
- * Airport transfers
- * Sleeping bag
- * Optional activities
- * Tips, drinks and items of a personal nature

