

# Guided birding trip with natural history specialities

in southern Namibia & South Africa

## „Larks & Deserts“

“In order to see birds, it is necessary to become a part of the silence.”

9 SEITEN - 19 (21) DAY

-Robert Lynd

### Overview

Don't forget to pack your binoculars, wide-angle lens, zoom lens, and preferably a second camera when heading to Southern Namibia. This region invites you to open your eyes and appreciate the less obvious but equally captivating aspects of the landscape.

While larks take center stage, keep an eye out for agamas, rock shrikes, and eremomelas amidst the enchanting quiver tree forests. In the linear dunes, watch for snakes and the bustling colonies of Sociable Weavers during their mass breeding season. Deep in the Kalahari, you'll find tiny Pygmy Falcons and whistling rats, with a chance to spot cheetahs and lions as well. Near the Orange River's dramatic plunge into the depths, search for Namaqua and Cinnamon-breasted Warblers. Can you spot Sclater's Lark amidst the rugged terrain?

Beyond observing the wild horses of the Namib, our goal is to discover at least two subspecies of Barlow's Lark in the arid yet breathtaking desert landscape. We'll also admire the majestic arched rock formation home to African Oystercatchers. During a boat tour, we'll photograph African Penguins and become acquainted with Bank Cormorants.

The world's tallest dunes at Sossusvlei are home to the Dune Lark, the true Namibian endemic species we seek. Naturally, we'll also explore the gardens of the dune ant and witness the iconic desert sunrise.

Near the Welwitschia, a living fossil, we'll search for the Karoo Eremomela and the Namaqua Chameleon. Swakopmund promises a bounty of wading birds, a wealth of history, leaping dolphins, and the possibility of encountering a moonfish or even a whale.

At Spitzkopje, amidst the awe-inspiring granite boulders, we aim to capture the elusive Herero Chat on camera. The entire area is simply breathtaking.

This journey is designed for those seeking a truly unique experience in the special deserts of Namibia, where you'll capture images that cannot be replicated anywhere else in Africa.



## Accommodation:

All lodges, guest farms and hotels on this trip offer you the necessary comfort of upper middle class - accommodation with "en suite" bathrooms.

All accommodation is ideally situated for the benefit of good viewing and correct route logistics regarding Namibia's long driving distances.

## Day 1

We might find Bennet...

- \* 1 night in a charming bungalow-style lodge nestled amid the linear dunes. We chose this small, eco-friendly lodge for its commitment to preserving the natural habitat. Instead of removing trees, they've built around them, minimising disruption to the environment.

### inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast
- \* Game drive into the dunes in the afternoon, a so-called "sundowner drive".

### Leaflove Birding Tip:

This location is ideal for spotting Black and African Cuckoos. Be sure to keep an eye out for the White-faced Scops Owl, Golden-tailed Woodpecker, and even the rare Bennett's Woodpecker.

## Day 2, 3 & 4

This is not a desert...

- \* 1 night at a "Game Lodge" with a very large Private Wildlife Protectorate, which also offers game drives to the lions on the premises.
- \* 2 nights deep in the dune world of the Kalahari at a very comfortable wilderness lodge

### inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast
- \* Locally guided activities in the form of game drives and night game drives.

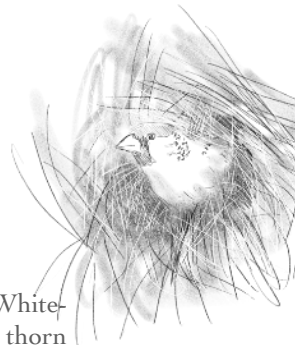
### Leaflove Birding Tip:

Raptors love the Kalahari. Lots of Pygmy Falcon, Jackal Buzzard, Shikra and Snake Eagles. Fawn-coloured Lark running on roads, Lappet-faced and White-backed Vultures breed in wintertime.

## Birding in Acacia Forest and Red Dunes

This nature-oriented trip begins with a swift departure from the capital, ensuring you immerse yourself in the wilderness at the earliest opportunity.

Our journey takes us into the heart of the Kalahari Desert, and along the way, we make regular stops to peer beneath the colossal nests of Sociable Weavers. With a touch of luck, we may even spot the elusive Cape cobra, a keen nest predator. Pygmy Falcons and Rosy-faced Lovebirds often choose these nests as their breeding grounds. Beyond the breathtaking beauty of the Kalahari's red dunes and valleys adorned with camel thorn trees, it's the early morning nature walks that prove particularly rewarding. Here, we anticipate encounters with a variety of woodpeckers, cuckoos, and the photogenic Ant-eating Chat, offering ample opportunities for memorable wildlife photography.



## Deepest Kalahari

Birding amidst the dunes is a captivating experience. Look up, and you might spot White-backed Vultures perched on ancient camel thorn acacias, or catch a glimpse of Rosy-faced Lovebirds nesting in the intricate Sociable Weaver's nests. And don't be surprised if you encounter a tortoise or the ever-watchful Fawn-coloured Lark, often found right in the car lane. Yet, the true allure lies in the diversity of wildlife that inhabits this terrain. It's not uncommon to spot majestic black-maned lions, cheetahs, or even the elusive leopard against the backdrop of the red dunes. Antelope sightings are frequent, and the avifauna offers an array of predators, including snake eagles, Secretarybirds, and Pale Chanting Goshawks.

In the Kalahari, there's always something waiting to be discovered, whether it's a whistling rat darting through the dune sand or the enchanting world of night creatures. During our night game drive, we hope to introduce you to aardvarks, genet cats, and porcupines. Depending on the season, you might also be treated to the haunting calls of nightjars as part of your nocturnal birdwatching adventure.

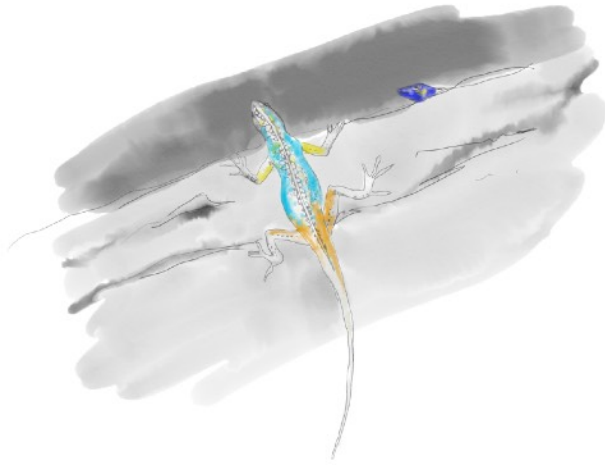
## Day 5 & 6

Tropical desert...

- \* 2 nights in a bungalow in the Augrabies Falls National Park.

inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast



## Augrabies Falls & National Park

Augrabies, known as "The Place of Noise," takes its name from the Augrabies Falls. These falls were sculpted as the Orange River, marking the border between South Africa and Namibia, carved a deep 60-meter chasm through the rugged granite terrain, forming a grand cascade in the process. The thundering waters of the falls, accompanied by the calls of Hadedda Ibises, beckon exploration of this captivating location.

The spherical granite landscape is ever-changing and immensely impressive. Within the small green oases nestled against the bare granite, you'll find Namaqua Warblers and various "bushbirds," adding to the region's allure. One can't help but be captivated by the photogenic blue-red Augrabies Flat Lizard and the endearing gazes of the numerous Hyraxes basking on smooth rock surfaces.

On the steep slopes of the Augrabies Gorge, you might be fortunate to spot Verreaux's Eagles and Jackal Buzzards soaring through the skies. And if you have a particular interest in photographing baboons, Augrabies is the perfect place to indulge in this endeavour.

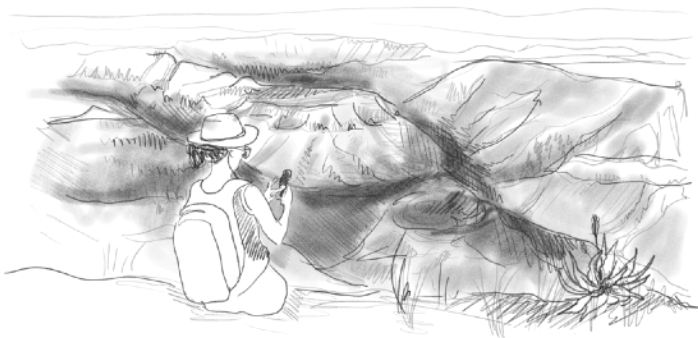
## Day 7 & 8

succulent wonders growing everywhere...

- \* 2 nights lodging east of the canyon, literally walled in amidst fabulous granite spheres.

inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast



## Fishriver Canyon...

second largest on earth

This canyon, the second largest on Earth, boasts a stunning landscape adorned with beautiful shades of browns and reds. Here, you can embark on quests to spot the Karoo Long-billed Lark, search for the elusive Sclater's Lark, listen for the unique call of the Karoo Korhaan, and, if you're fortunate, catch a glimpse of the rare Karoo Eremomela against the backdrop of mesmerizing geological formations.

Amidst this rugged terrain, you'll encounter deep red aloes, exquisitely toxic yet captivating spurge, marvellously concealed stone creepers, and enchanting light that never fails to fascinate our visitors. One young boy, when asked for directions to the canyon, aptly described it as a place where "something terrible must have happened to the earth many years ago."

The Fish River Canyon is a true marvel, both in terms of its geological significance and its awe-inspiring scenery. Its striking rock formations, eroded valleys, and remarkable depth all contribute to its breathtaking allure.

As you explore, keep an eye out for the Grey Tit, an avian gem that may make a delightful appearance amidst this stunning backdrop.

## Day 9

Sunset brilliant all year round

\* 1 night at a rustic lodge nestled on the edge of the Namib Desert, where winter rains occasionally grace the land, and snow is a rare occurrence even in Namibia. This tranquil lodge boasts breathtaking views that will enhance your stay.

inclusive:

\* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast

### Leaflove Birding Tip:

We have some great spots for Grey Tit, Grey-backed Cisticola, Cinnamon-breasted Warbler, Karoo Eremomela and Black-headed Canary

## Half-Man, Cape Robin-Chats & Wild Horses

In the seemingly barren and often harsh landscape of the south, the Orange River emerges as a lifeline, creating a linear oasis. Here, vibrant rock formations are adorned with various aloes and succulents, many of which burst into beautiful blooms. One particularly rare find is the "half-man," the *Pachypodium namaquanum*. To admire this unique plant, a short climb is required, and the thrill of discovery is part of the adventure.

Along the banks of the Orange River, partially shaded by "Jacket Plums," you can spot the Cape Robin-Chat and, with a stroke of luck, the Grey-backed Cisticola in the sparse mountain vegetation.

In addition to the familiar quiver trees, *Aloidendron dichotomum* and *A. pilansii*, the *Aloidendron ramosissimum*, often referred to as the "maiden quiver tree," is an intriguing and highly photogenic presence in this region.

The origin of the wild horses in the Namib Desert remains a subject of debate. Reliable research points to a German-Boer origin during the tumultuous times of World War I. Regardless of their historical context, witnessing these wild horses in their natural freedom is a remarkable experience. Who knows, you may even capture the sought-after photo of battling stallions during your visit.



## Day 10 & 11

get ready for some wind folks...

- \* 2 nights in a comfortable guesthouse / pension / hotel

### inclusive:

- \* Bed & Breakfast
- \* Boat trip to Halifax Island. Here you can see the rare spectacled African Penguins and often get to see Heaviside's Dolphins - a really crisp refreshing experience.

### not inclusive:

- \* Day trip into the completely untouched wilderness of the Sperrgebiet to the Elisabeth Bay Mine.

## Lüderitz Bay, Larks & Penguins

In the early morning, you'll have the opportunity to capture the Cinnamon-breasted Warbler against a backdrop of red rocks, drawing you into the enchanting morning light.

Our first stop is at Haalenberg, where the striking *Euphorbia dregeana* marks the beginning of our "Barlow Stop" adventure in this captivating landscape.

The Barlow's Lark is divided into three distinct subspecies, each associated with diverse landscapes and intriguing destinations: *Calendulauda barlowi barlowi* can be found in the region near Lüderitz.

*C. b. cavei* is located a bit further south of Aus, on the gravel plains.

*C. b. patae* is found south of Lüderitz, often near the imposing Bogenfels rock formation.

As we journey towards the Atlantic Ocean, the colonial history of the area becomes evident amidst the expansive and multicoloured geological wonders. If conditions allow, we'll search for the Black-headed Canary and the Barlow's Lark amidst the dense growth of *Euphorbia gummifera* and *degreana*.

Our route also takes us through Kolmanskop, a location with a fascinating history. Mr. Kolman once attempted to reach the sea along this route, but the unforgiving landscape made orientation difficult for newcomers. Believing he was far from the coast, he resorted to shooting his thirsty oxen, only to discover that Lüderitz Bay was just a short walk behind the next hill. Kolmanskop later became a thriving diamond mining town and eventually transformed into a captivating ghost town—an experience well worth exploring.

As we continue our journey, the picturesque town of Lüderitz suddenly emerges amidst the rugged gneiss formations that have endured the relentless erosion by the Atlantic Ocean for millennia.



## Supplementary programme?

If there was rainfall...

- \* You'll enjoy a comfortable two-night stay at Nomtsas Farm, situated within Leaflove Safari's game reserve and conservancy. Here, you'll find beautifully appointed guest rooms, each individually decorated and equipped with en-suite bathrooms. Please note that overnight stays at Nomtsas Farm are exclusively available to Leaflove Safari clients.

### inclusive:

- \* Overnight stay and supported self-catering (filled fridge)

### Leaflove Birding Tip:

Did you know that the Namibian Bird Club just loves this place. Since no other tourists are allowed here, birding is completely individual without any pressure or disturbance. You wanna check these pans after the rain... hundreds and hundreds of birds!

## Nomtsas Farm, the Leaflove Sanctuary

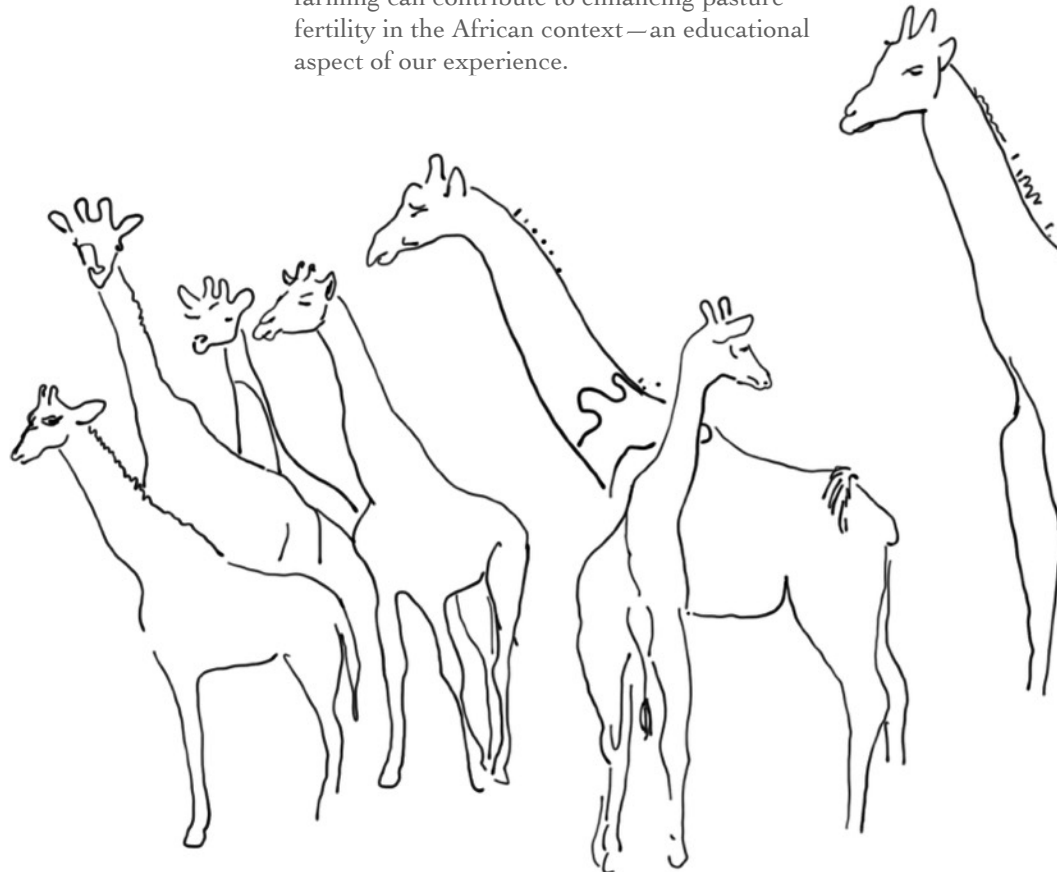
The Fish River gracefully winds its way through the vibrant red sandstone and tranquil grey-green shale plains of our wilderness. Here on our farm, we've created 12 shallow reservoirs to provide sanctuaries for birdlife, and a network of "jeep tracks" guides you through the diverse habitats that make up our landscape.

Our farm is often referred to as a "lark's paradise." Throughout the year, you can easily spot various lark species, including the Karoo Long-billed Lark, Sabota Lark, Sclater's Lark, Stark's Lark, and several Sparrow-larks.

During the rainy season from January to March, our region experiences a remarkable influx of birdlife. We'll be delighted to help you locate the sought-after Rufous-eared Warbler within the Water-thorn thickets. The lakes here are home to successful breeding populations of Greater Painted Snipes, and we'll introduce you to hundreds of waders and waterfowl.

On the vast grasslands, you can observe various bustard species, alongside Double-banded, Temminck's, and Burchell's Coursers as they tirelessly hunt termites.

Our 20,000-hectare game reserve is complemented by an economically sustainable sector where nature-friendly cattle breeding is practiced. In addition to birdwatching, we aim to acquaint you with the giraffes and antelope species that call this area home. We'll also share insights into how cattle farming can contribute to enhancing pasture fertility in the African context—an educational aspect of our experience.



## Day 12, 13 & 14 a red coat..



- \* 2 nights at a fantastically situated luxury camp in the world famous Namib Rand Nature Reserve.
- \* 1 night at a good semi-state lodge INSIDE the Namib Naukluft Park. We use the exclusive right of this lodge to be in the dunes BEFORE sunrise.

### inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed & Breakfast
- \* Game drive in an open terrain jeep with well-trained guides in the Namib Rand Nature Reserve.
- \* Locally guided game drive to Sossusvlei.

## Day 15 & 16

Good coffee, flamingos and a special tern

- \* 2 nights in a small, simple hotel with North Sea character. (If you like a traditional breakfast and want to stay in midst of town yet close to the beach, this place is for you)

or

- \* 2 nights in a small, very neat and trendy Italian style Guesthouse close to the sea. (If you like good coffee, good wine, a lovely view, room and a friendly host, this place is for you)

### inclusive:

- \* Bed and breakfast (dinner is a la carte at the restaurant of your choice and is not included).

### not inclusive, booked on request:

- \* Boat trip on the "Lagoon of Walfish Bay" (approx. 4 hours)
- \* Eco Living Desert Safari to the "Little Five of the Desert" (approx. 4 hours)



## Dune Landscapes on the Namib Rand, Sossusvlei & the Sesriem Canyon

The Dune Lark is not only the sole true endemic bird species of Namibia but also a captivating target for observation. Its captivating rust-red-brown-orange plumage is matched by the awe-inspiring landscapes it calls home, a visual treat for all nature enthusiasts.

Picture this: Red dune valleys blanketed in golden grass stretching as far as the eye can see...

A morning in the dunes bathed in gentle sunlight creates an unforgettable tableau. We're delighted to introduce you to the diverse reptile species and the life-sustaining "Nara" plant! The Tsauchab Dry River's course to the ocean has been blocked by shifting sand dunes, resulting in a clay soil depression known as "Sossusvlei." Encircled by the world's tallest dunes, reaching the summit is rewarded with a breathtaking panoramic view. Our ecologically mindful game drives take you through these extraordinary dune valleys.

Don't miss a visit to the Sesriem Canyon during your exploration.

## Through the oldest desert to the Atlantic Ocean. . .

The Namibian coast presents a rich array of diverse habitats for birdwatchers, provided you know how to navigate them effectively. We traverse the seemingly lifeless gravel plains of the Namib in search of the long-tailed Eremomela, Rufous-eared Warbler, and Gray's Lark. Who would have imagined encountering a plant almost as ancient as the Ginkgo biloba, first discovered by an Austrian named Welwitsch in 1859? Amid the dunes of Kuiseb, we set out to find the somewhat lighter-hued version of the endemic Dune Lark and Gray's Lark, alongside the Trac Trac Chat. The Walvis Bay Lagoon offers a diverse array of wading birds, which can be enjoyed to the fullest during the summer months, from October to March. We are well-acquainted with the west side and secret paths that promise excellent sightings of the Damara Tern, various other terns, and of course, numerous sandpipers, ducks, and literally thousands of Flamingos. In Swakopmund, you can savour a good coffee under the palm trees, photograph the Orange River White-eye, and explore well-stocked bookshops for ornithological literature.



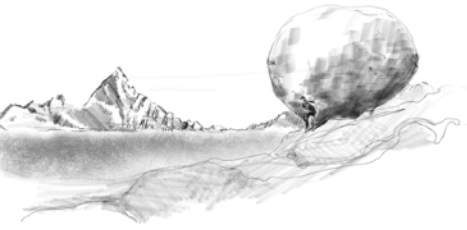
## Day 17

Rocks and feathers...

- \* 1 night's accommodation in a high-quality lodge near the Bushman's Paradise in the midst of fantastic granite scenery.

inclusive:

- \* Dinner, Bed and breakfast



## Day 18

before dawn...

- \* 1 night in the middle of the northern Erongo on an idyllically situated high quality bush camp / bush lodge, where you often have the endemics "on your doorstep".

inclusive:

- \* Dinner, bed and breakfast



## Spitzkoppe

The vast expanse of stunning geological formations and the sparsely vegetated pencil plants create a unique habitat for a small population of "Karoo Eremomela." These landscapes contribute to the exceptional beauty that Namibia is renowned for!

While spotting the Herero Chat may be more challenging, the region it inhabits offers a breathtaking birding, geological, and photographic experience. The Spitzkoppe, also known as Bushman's Paradise, presents numerous opportunities for birdwatching. Klipspringers gracefully scale the rock faces, and the granite terrain is adorned with thick-stemmed "Elephant's Foot" trees. Among our target bird species, in addition to the commonly seen Short-toed Rock-Thrush and Mountain Wheatear, are the schlegelii subspecies of the Karoo Chat, Layard's Warbler, and the Black-backed Puffback with its striking red eye.

## Erongo

Between the imposing granite boulders, you'll find intriguing succulents belonging to the vine, euphorbia, and dog poison families. Dotted amidst the landscape are various acacia species (now known as Vachellia and Senegalia due to renaming) and several grass species, creating an ideal habitat for a range of semi-desert birds. Namibia's breathtaking landscapes have a way of capturing the hearts of many visitors, and it's no wonder that areas boasting semi-endemic bird, reptile, and plant species become a sought-after destination for naturalists, especially birders in search of the extraordinary.

Even before dusk settles in, we tune our ears to the calls of the hardy Hartlaub Francolin, capturing photographs of Rockrunners alongside Cape- and Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, the vocal Mountain Wheatear, and the Bokmakierie. The seemingly inhospitable scrublands of the Namib Desert harbour the highly sought-after Herero Chat, and we'll make every effort to track it down for you. Amongst the dense foliage of the "Resin Tree," you may encounter the Layard's Warbler, also known as the Tit-babbler, and with a bit of luck, you might even spot an *Anthia cinctipennis*.

On well-established trails tucked away in the remote corners of a private farm in the Erongo region, we've uncovered small bird paradises where we'd love to join you in seeking out some of the more elusive bird species.



## Day 19

no matter the weather...

### Inclusions:

- \* Transportation in a travel- and safari-friendly four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruiser.
- \* Transfers as outlined in the itinerary.
- \* Guaranteed window or single seat for each participant.
- \* Accommodation and meals as specified in the itinerary.
- \* Scheduled activities as per the itinerary.
- \* All entrance fees to National Parks and attractions as outlined in the itinerary.
- \* An experienced trilingual tour guide proficient in English, German, and Afrikaans.
- \* Guided tours conducted in English, with the option for the guide to communicate in German and Afrikaans.
- \* Complimentary drinking water provided in the vehicle.

### Exclusions:

- \* Personal expenses
- \* Beverages and gratuities
- \* International & regional flights
- \* Visa Expenses

## 2024 Indicative Rates

Participants per vehicle	per Person
1 Person	\$ 16.847,00
2 Persons	\$ 10.927,00
3 Persons	\$ 8.953,00
4 Persons	\$ 7.966,00
5 Persons	\$ 7.374,00
6 Persons	\$ 6.980,00
7 Persons	\$ 6.698,00
Single Room Supplement	\$ 1.268,00

unfortunately time for goodbyes...

We will ensure you reach the International Airport in a timely manner, and we sincerely hope that we have provided you with the birdwatching experiences and natural moments you desired, leaving you with lasting memories of our time together in nature.

### An OFFER, specially for you...

- \* You should get exactly what you want, tailor-made!
- \* We will gladly send you this trip with exact accommodation details and would adjust them to your needs any time

### Recommended upgrades

- \* Just let us know where and which upgrades you prefer and we will send you the calculation

### Too expensive, extensive or changes desired?

- \* We can shorten trip to suit your area of interest
- \* Offer you the trip as a self-drive trip; you can then use the local guides
- \* Choose cheaper accommodation or cheaper rooms at the lodges

### Contact with Namibia

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