



**NAMIBIA AND BOTSWANA PHOTO AND
WILDLIFE TOUR**

9 - 21 MARCH 2020



Rockrunner is one of our targets on this trip.

This is a photographic birding tour that gives you time in some of Africa's greatest (no exaggeration!) wildlife havens. We begin the trip with three days in the rugged Erongo Mountains where, at the magical lodge we use, some localized and striking birds can be seen and photographed, truly up-close and personal, among the amazing rock formations. The middle part of the tour finds us in one of the continent's finest game parks, Etosha. Here Lions and other big cats, African Elephants, rhino, Giraffe, and a plethora of other big and small mammals roam freely among some spectacular birds, such as **Crimson-breasted Shrike**, **Secretarybird**, various owls (some of them at their daytime roosts), and all the others. Floodlit waterholes at the park's lodges provide awesome and rather easy photographic opportunities. Finally, we bird the panhandle of the Okavango Delta in Botswana – this inland delta is of course world-famous and needs no introduction. All in all, this 12-days tour gives an absolutely dream African experience, and it allows time for photography.

Itinerary (13 days/12 nights)

Days 1 – 3. Erongo Wilderness Lodge

After our international flight arrives in Windhoek we head west for the Erongo Mountains (three hours drive with no stops) on the edge of the Namib Desert. The Erongo Wilderness Lodge, where we spend three nights, has feeders and water troughs that attract noisy flocks of **Rosy-faced Lovebird**, small coveys of the localized, bizarre and usually (but not here!) highly secretive **Hartlaub's Spurfowl**, and a host of other exciting birds within meters of photographers. The fabulous **White-tailed Shrike** is common around the lodge. This species – like several of the birds here in the Erongo Mountains – is restricted to northern Namibia and southern Angola. Cape Porcupine is also sometimes very confiding near the restaurant. Other mammals, such as Greater Kudu, are usually seen at greater distance. The secretive but striking Black Mongoose often gives fleeting views (if seen at all!), and rarely poses long enough for photographs. At dusk **Freckled Nightjar** usually appears and makes its dog-like “bow-wow” call. A morning walk usually easily generates **Rockrunner**, another strikingly-marked, characterful, and localized bird. A drive from the lodge to a nearby dry riverbed lined with tall Camel Thorn trees can be good for **Rüppell's Parrot** and **Violet Wood Hoopoe**. Time-permitting, a walk to a cave with stone-age rock paintings is worthwhile.

Overnight: Erongo Wilderness Lodge, Omaruru

Days 4 – 5. Etosha National Park

We have a half day's drive to Etosha National Park, where we spend two nights at Okaukuejo Camp in comfortable chalets. The floodlit waterhole here must be one of the world's best places to see the rare Black Rhinoceros. Loads of other animals and birds come here to drink day and night, including African Elephant, Plains Zebra, Springbok, **Double-banded Sandgrouse**, and a host of others. **Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**, **Western Barn Owl**, **Grey-hooded Kingfisher**, **Crimson-breasted Shrike** (Namibia's absolutely brilliantly-colored national bird), and **Sociable Weaver** (with its humungous nests) also frequent the camp. Venturing out of the camp in our vehicle (due to the presence of dangerous animals it is illegal to alight from the vehicle) on birding/game drives, we will look for **Pygmy Falcon**, larks, **Double-banded Courser**, **Secretarybird**, **Ant-eating Chat**, Lion, Cheetah (this cat is rare, but Etosha provides a fair chance at it), and a host of others.

Overnight: Okaukuejo Camp, Etosha National Park

Days 6 – 7. Etosha National Park

After final wildlife photography at Okaukuejo we head into the heart of Etosha and spend two nights at Halali Camp – which is in a completely different habitat (mopane woodland instead of open plains and savanna). The floodlit waterhole at this camp is at least as good as the one at Okaukuejo; in fact it provides a better chance at Leopard (especially if you are willing to spend hours there at night with a bottle of wine – it can be a tough life in Africa!). We sometimes find five different owl species at Halali – on a recent visit there we located **Southern White-faced Owl**, **African Scops Owl**, and **Western Barn Owl** at their daytime roosts, in addition to active **Pearl-spotted Owlet** – this is a pygmy owl species that is active both day and night. Honey Badger is known to lurk around the camp at night.

Overnight: Halali Camp, Etosha National Park

Day 8 – 9. Etosha National Park

We spend our last two Namibian nights (before proceeding to Botswana) at Mushara Lodge on the far eastern side of Etosha just outside the park. Once again the eastern side of Etosha presents a very different habitat compared to the two camps we will have been to. Gangs of Banded Mongoose are very tame around here, and this gregarious, gorgeously cute, and well-marked animal provides much entertainment and seems to love being in photos. Many *Acacia* birds are found in this area, and with luck we might even see **Red-necked Falcon**. A drive to the interesting plains to the north of the camp often generates beautiful **Blue Crane** (near-endemic to South Africa except for an isolated population here in Etosha), **Eastern Clapper Lark**, herds of game, and much else. An extension of the massive Etosha Pan or “the Great White Place” itself, Fischer’s Pan, sometimes holds large amounts of water, unlike most of the rest of this ancient “wetland” (now dry in modern times!).

Overnight: Mushara Lodge, Tsumeb

Days 10 – 12. Okavango Panhandle

We have a long drive (at least half a day) to the Okavango. We head northeast from Namutoni, eventually reaching much less arid areas, soon finding ourselves in Namibia’s tropical Caprivi Strip. Eventually we meet the Kavango River, which we then follow southwards into Botswana. Here in Botswana this large river spreads out into the panhandle of the incredible Okavango Delta – eventually the thirsty Kalahari sands absorb the entire river, preventing it from ever getting to the sea. The Okavango Delta is a humungous oasis, consisting of papyrus-lined channels, riverine, forest-covered islands, and quiet backwaters. Crocodiles and Hippopotamuses are common in these swamps, as are a plethora of herons (including some quite rare ones, such as **White-backed Night Heron**, **Rufous-bellied Heron**, the very localized **Slaty Egret**, etc.), and kingfishers (from the minute **Malachite Kingfisher** to the huge **Giant Kingfisher** - and everything in between). Several different bee-eaters add an awesome splash of almost unbelievable rainbow colors, and one of the most spectacular sights is arguably the most spectacular species, **Southern Carmine Bee-eater**, breeding on sandbanks along the river. Many of these birds mentioned can be approached very closely by boat – which is how we spend much of our time birding here in the delta. One of the great prizes of the Okavango is **Pel’s Fishing Owl**, which we usually find without many problems, along with **African Wood Owl** and

African Barred Owlet, Brown Firefinch, African Pygmy Goose, hornbills, and a rich diversity of other birds will also be sought here.

Overnight: Xaro Lodge, Shakawe

Day 13. Departure

We have a four-hour-long drive to Maun for our flights home.

Duration: 13 days

Limit: 4 – 7

Date: 9 - 21 March 2020

Start: Windhoek, Namibia

End: Maun, Botswana

Price: R101,830 per person sharing, based on 4 – 7 participants in a 14-seater van with some seats removed

Single supplement: R15,873

Price includes:

Meals

Accommodation

All transport while on tour

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

Bottled water throughout the tour

Price excludes:

International flights

Drinks

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts

Laundry

Personal insurance

Tips

Please note that the itinerary above cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.