

Practical tips for visitors to Namibia

Background

Namibia is a country of stark beauty, and a place that you should visit. As a country, Namibia would love to welcome you.

Having said that, as someone living in Namibia, who visited a lot of the place that tourists would likely wish to travel, herewith a couple of practical tips that should help you in your travels.

The tips

Safety

Namibia is a safe and hospitable country, but, when you travel anywhere in Africa as a tourist, take care to not make a target of yourself:

- a. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you. As a traveller, it is always a good idea to carry some cash for the unexpected, but you really do not need to carry large wads of dollars or euro with you. See “paying in Namibia” below.
- b. When traveling by car, do not leave valuable items in plain sight when you park and leave the vehicle, such as camera’s, computer, tablets, etc.

Paying in Namibia

VISA and MasterCard debit and credit cards are generally widely accepted in Namibia.

Most towns also have one or more ATM’s available where you can draw cash if needed.

Generally, stay away from American Express or Diners Club cards when traveling in Africa.

Renting a vehicle

If you visit Namibia to see the major sites, you will likely need to travel on gravel roads. Gravel roads in Namibia are generally good, but gravel roads by nature are not intended to be travelled using a passenger vehicle.

Spend the bit extra and rent a proper SUV or bakkie (truck) if you are going to travel on gravel roads.

Generally, you will need to travel on gravel roads if you intend to visit any of the following sites (not meant to be an exhaustive list):

- a. Fish river canyon,
- b. Etosha if you intend to drive yourself inside the park,

- c. Sossusvlei and the Sesriem canyon,
- d. Traveling on the gravel roads in and around the desert areas, etc.

Gravel (dirt) roads

Driving on a gravel road is a lot different from tarred surfaces. If you are not experienced traveling gravel roads, then slow down. The speed limit on gravel roads is 80 kilometres per hour.

That will start to feel slow when you travel long distances, but rather travel slower, take a bit longer, and get to your destination safely.

If 80 kilometres per hour still makes you uncomfortable, then slow down more.

We won't mind if you stay a bit longer.

Water

Namibia is a desert country. Yes, I've said it before, but this fact brings with it a couple of extra things to consider.

- a. When traveling long distances in Namibia, try to always take extra water with you.
- b. If driving, then also take a large container of extra water. Why? Your vehicle also needs water to keep it's cool. When traveling on especially gravel roads, there is a risk, slim but possible, that the radiator of your vehicle (the thing keeps it cool), or the hoses leading to and from it, could take damage and lose water, which could result in the vehicle overheating. Having extra water to fill up the radiator could save you from breaking down along the way.

Driving

We drive on the left side of the road.

Really? Yes, really! Like the Brits? Yes, just like to Brits, the Ausies and the Japanese.

So, why am I telling you this? If you're used to driving on the right, then it will feel strange to now drive on the other side of the road.

When driving long distance, be careful to not drift to the wrong side of the road.

Map or GPS

A GPS (or Google maps) is nice and easy to use, but when traveling of the beaten path, take a map, if you can, for when the electronics let you down.

The beaten path

No matter how tempting it looks, never leave established roads, and just drive off into the desert, the veld, a riverbed, etc.



Not only could you be damaging a protected area, but it is also for your safety.

If you leave the established roads and venture off on your own, should you get lost or your vehicle breaks down, then it could be a loooooonnggg time before someone comes by to help.

In conclusion

I hope these couple of Namibia travel tips will help you enjoy your trip to our beautiful country even more.

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