



The stunning vistas at Mundulea are typical of the views in Namibia's Central Highlands and Waterberg areas

CENTRAL NAMIBIAN HIGHLANDS

Between Windhoek and Etosha lies a region of gentle rolling hills, where many of Namibia's larger farms and ranches can be found. (To put this in perspective, a 'farm' in Namibia means about 100km² of apparently wild bush.) A few have nurtured wildlife for a decade or so, but many more are now being turned into lodges, to look after guests and wild game, instead of cattle or sheep. It's a positive change for Namibia's wildlife, and is sustained largely by income from visitors.

These lodges are all different, reflecting their individual hosts and locations. All offer comfortable accommodation with en-suite facilities, and most organise activities too. You will often dine with your hosts and get really personal views of Namibia from them.

Just south of Otjiwarongo is a relaxed lodge owned by the Hanssen family. A stay at **Okonjima Main Camp**, or their luxurious **Bush Camp**, includes all your meals and activities. You can walk around the enormous ranch on your own, hop on a guided 4WD or follow a trail illustrating the lifestyle of some of the region's original people.

That said, big cats are the main attraction here. Namibia has over 20% of the world's cheetah population – the largest concentration in the world – and Okonjima is the base for the **AfriCat programme**,

which is devoted to saving the country's big predators: cheetah, leopard, lion, caracal and wild dog. A stay of one or two nights here will usually give you the chance to see some of them at close range. (For safety, these activities are not suitable for children under 12.)

Okonjima has recently completed a magnificent new **Bush Suite**, ideal for four people travelling together. Even more opulent, the new **Okonjima Villa** is 10km from the main lodge, sleeps up to 12 – and accepts children as part of family groups.

Erongo Wilderness Lodge, just west of Omaruru, perches amidst rugged granite kopjies and makes a perfect stop between Swakopmund and Etosha or Etosha and Windhoek. Its 10 comfortable tented chalets have superb views and the area is ideal both for birdwatching and for experienced walkers to explore for themselves. A morning walk with a lodge guide is included.

MUNDULEA NATURE RESERVE

Mundulea is owned and run by Bruno Nebe who, although not widely known, is one of the best guides in Africa. His intimate knowledge of Namibia's flora and fauna is mixed with an almost implausibly detailed understanding of geology, geography, archaeology and a wide spectrum of Namibia's political and economic issues. Yet all this expertise is carried very lightly by his relaxed, unpretentious guiding style. It's earned Bruno a loyal following of repeat visitors and, in the 10 years since we started working with him, much praise from our travellers – including a significant number of families.

Mundulea is a private 120km² nature reserve in the Otavi Mountains. This beautiful Karstveld landscape has rugged hills, steep gorges and a vast network of caves and underground lakes. It is some of the most fertile land in Namibia, with huge spreading trees and a particularly rich biodiversity. Bruno and his wife Kate started

rehabilitating this reserve some seven years ago – and they now work with a few hand-picked guides (we know them all personally) who share their passion for understanding the wilderness.

The bush camp at Mundulea was completely redesigned during 2008: it now has four large, tented rooms, each with a private en-suite bathroom and spacious veranda. The accommodation is private and distinct, connected to the main dining area by a series of wooded pathways. Great care has been taken to create a camp that blends attractively into the surrounding bush, which is peaceful, quiet, and sustainably close to an intriguing waterhole. Notably good meals are cooked for you on an open fire and are eaten outdoors at one of the most stunning wooden dining tables you are likely to see!

Come to Mundulea for a varied three or four days' walking with an excellent guide. There's absolutely no set trail – everything depends on what you want to see, and what you find. These aren't route-marches; you'll go at your own pace with time to explore the landscapes and observe the wildlife – large and small. There are over 260 species of birds here and it's one of the best places in Namibia to see both eland, Africa's largest antelope, and its smallest, the dik dik. You'll also find many of Namibia's more common antelope, as well as giraffe, zebra, bat-eared foxes, leopard, cheetah and hyena.

In addition, Mundulea is quietly pursuing its commitment to 'restoration ecology' by becoming a centre for the protection of rare, indigenous species (such as black rhino and the black-faced impala) and the conservation of Namibia's unique biodiversity.

Call us for the latest on Mundulea. The guides' enthusiasm and depth of knowledge makes this a real highlight of any Namibian trip. (Adding on a three-night stay at Mundulea to a Namibia fly-drive will typically cost around £875 per person for a couple or three people – including all meals, drinks and activities. This reduces to £721 each for four or more people.)



Flowing Victorian dresses are traditional for Herero women



Cheetah on the lookout at Okonjima



Tents at Erongo Wilderness Lodge perch amongst smooth boulders

WATERBERG PLATEAU WINDHOEK

On the east side of the Central Highlands, Waterberg Plateau is a unique flat-topped plateau with stunning scenery and excellent wildlife. It's largely made of sandstone, often sculpted into amazing shapes, and is dotted with freshwater springs. The diverse patchwork of wooded areas, grasslands and verdant ravines on the top is particularly well suited to hiking trips.

Given the plateau's isolated nature, endangered species, including white rhino, roan and sable antelope, have been reintroduced to Waterberg over the years, to add to its rich existing game. The birdlife is equally impressive, with more than 200 species, including spectacular Verreaux's (black) eagles and Namibia's only breeding colony of Cape vultures.

Much of the plateau is protected by the Waterberg Plateau National Park. The old Waterberg Restcamp on the slopes of the plateau, was recently hugely upgraded and renamed **Waterberg Camp**. It now has 69 en-suite rooms, some of innovative design and each with ceiling fans and a small fridge. It stands on the site of an old mission station and has a swimming pool, restaurant, bar and shop for convenience. You can wander along short marked walking trails or pay (locally) for a guided drive onto the plateau.

The nearby **Waterberg Wilderness Lodge** is surrounded by the cliffs of the plateau. This began as a traditional German guest farm, run by its owner-managers, Joachim and Caroline Rust. They and their team have renovated the crumbling farmstead into a comfortable place to stay, and a base to explore the plateau.

Waterberg Wilderness has a satellite camp, **Waterberg Plateau Lodge**, with just six chalets, each with its own plunge pool. Guests can enjoy dinner in camp, though breakfast is served at the main lodge and all the activities start there, including nature drives and guided walks onto the plateau. The guides who lead these trails know the routes well, but aren't wildlife experts.

A small, friendly capital, Windhoek is spread across a wide valley between bush-covered hills. As you stroll through the centre, the pavement cafés and picturesque old German architecture conspire to give a spacious, European feel, whilst street vendors remind you that this is Africa.

The office blocks are tall, but not skyscrapers, and the pace is active, but not frantic. The shops are good, especially for leather, gems and African curios, and the few restaurants are great value.

On your arrival we suggest a night at one of Windhoek's high-quality guesthouses – to give you time and space to relax. Very stylish yet traditional, the **Heinitzburg Hotel** is a small converted castle with superb views of the city. It has a pool, refined dining, a great wine cellar and luxurious rooms.

Hilltop House is a converted art studio in the pleasant district of Klein Windhoek. Hilltop has six large, individually styled bedrooms and a pretty garden with a pool. With 11 stylish, Moroccan-themed rooms, all with verandas, the **Olive Grove** has plenty of space, a refreshingly contemporary feel and cool, grey interiors. The welcome is warm,

the food excellent and the bathrooms indulgent.

Terra Africa is another good option and is great for those who love art. With its landscaped gardens and fine collection of Namibian and Ugandan art, it makes a friendly base for a night or two. Other possibilities in Windhoek include **Haus Sonneneck**, which is particularly good for families; **Pension Palmquell**; and two sister-properties, the **Elegant B & B** and the **Elegant Guesthouse**. On a hillside with stunning views, **Hotel Pension Thule** has 12 large, modern rooms with air conditioning, and plenty of chrome and glass.

Always ask us for news of what's best in Windhoek; several of *Expert Africa's* team have lived in Windhoek for most of their lives; they naturally keep up to date with developments.

Forty minutes' drive southeast of Windhoek, **Gochehanas** is Namibia's top spa. It offers quite good game activities within its 60km² reserve, combined with hydro-therapies, nutrition consultations, de-stress, detox, massage treatments and endless other pampering treatments!



Gathemann House on Independence Avenue, Windhoek

Township Tour

If you have half a day in Windhoek, we can arrange a fascinating township tour. About 10km from Windhoek's centre, Katutura is a bustling suburb housing people from several different Namibian cultures. With a local guide, you'll explore the history, development and people of Katutura. Each trip is different, but you might take in a local market, a shebeen, a women's craft market and perhaps a local café. It is a diverse, fun and lively place to visit, and trips here usually take about three hours.



Namibia's wooden curios are often well made and good value

Desert Express

The *Desert Express* is a luxury train service that runs overnight between Windhoek and Swakopmund, once every week in either direction. Dine in style as the sun sets and the moon rises above spectacular Namibian landscapes, then retire to your compact, comfortable cabin, with its en-suite shower and toilet. Ask our team for further details, and note that we will have to design your itinerary around the train's schedule.