

Namibia Hiking Expedition: The Naukluft Massif



Highlights

“Namibia” literally means “Land of Open Spaces”, and there are few better places from which to experience the sweeping vistas of this country than the Naukluft Mountains. Situated along the Eastern edge of Africa’s largest game park, the Naukluft Massif was set apart as a sanctuary for mountain zebra, and is also home to a host of other wildlife great and small.

The Naukluft Massif is a part of the Namib-Naukluft National Park, a vast area of protected land in Southwestern Namibia. The mountains form part of the Southern African Great Escarpment, marking the outer edge of the continent’s huge central plateau. To the West, the dune fields and open country of Namibia’s coastal margins stretch away into the distance. The Naukluft range is riddled with kloofs, gorges and ravines that provide shelter for some fifty species of mammals, and the crevices and rock formations of the mountains are ideal niches for many species of birds. Plant life here finds more of a foothold than in the desert, too, fed by pockets of water collected in the kloofs and numerous natural springs in the region.

This Namibia hiking expedition - and it truly is an expedition - takes you through some astonishingly varied terrain. A real challenge awaits you at Ubusis Gorge, a deep kloof into which you’ll descend with the aid of chains attached to the rock. On the plateau, you have every chance to see the mountain zebra -larger than their plains counterparts- for which the massif was originally set apart as a reserve. The Tsams River gorge is another beautiful ravine, nearby which you’ll witness Die Valle, a 200-metre-high waterfall that is spectacular even when dry, as it is for much of the year in this arid land. Finally, near the end of your trip, you’ll be able to take in the views from Bakenskop, a reminder, once again, of why Namibia is so deserving of its name

Is it for me?

This is a tough hike, by any standards. As is often the way, though, the rewards are immense. The whole walk covers 120 km over rough and often steep terrain. A medical certificate is required before beginning the trek, itself an indication that only those who are physically fit and in robust good health should even consider this expedition. Accommodation is basic, and you’ll be carrying all your supplies for the whole trip with you. Temperatures range from very hot during the day to very cold at night; good sleeping-bags are essential. If you’re still thinking that this trip sounds good after reading this, then you’ll probably love it.

Accommodation

Accommodation at the start and end of the expedition, and at Ubusis Gorge, offer some simple luxuries: beds with mattresses, and gas stoves. Other than that, you’ll be camping in fairly basic structures, often little more than a roof and stone or brick walls. Good sleeping-bags are an essential requirement, as the nights can get surprisingly chilly, and you’ll need to take gas stoves of your own if you intend to cook along the way: open fires are strictly forbidden. Food is expedition fare: you’ll be carrying all provisions except water for the whole trip, so weight and space are major deciding factors with this as with all other issues. That doesn’t mean that the food, or the accommodation, won’t be enjoyable- ending a hard day’s trekking with a hearty meal cooked with friends in one of Nature’s pristine wildernesses is a guaranteed way to appreciate the simple things in life.

Itinerary

Prices from
1,176 GBP (10 days) per person

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Day 1: Windhoek-Naukluft, via Rietoog (285 Km)

From the airport, you'll immediately drive toward the Naukluft mountains. Your campsite for the night will be an old farmhouse. A hearty dinner of meat and vegetables will be the last taste of luxury for the next eight days.

Day 2: Naukluft Walking Trail

You'll start early from Hiker's Haven, walking mostly uphill. Two steep ascents later you'll reach a plateau and the walking becomes a little easier. The distance to be covered today is 14km; you'll set up camp at Putte.

Day 3: Naukluft Walking Trail

Today's destination is Ubisis Gorge, descending into the canyon with the help of chains anchored into the rock. The distance to be covered today is 15km. You'll set up camp at the old farmer's cottage at the end of the gorge.

Day 4: Naukluft Walking Trail

Adlerhost shelter is your destination. This 12km hike is mainly on the plateau, and is, therefore, relatively easy. Hopefully, today you'll spot the animal for the protection of which this park was created - the mountain zebra.

Day 5: Naukluft Hiking Trail

Today you'll ascend and bypass a waterfall in the beautiful Tsams River Gorge - a milestone to be noted. 17km later, you'll reach the shelter at Tsams-Ost.

Day 6: Naukluft Hiking Trail

After breakfast, you'll head towards Broekskeur. Although a fairly steep climb, once on top, it is a relatively easy walk. Your camp for the night is at Die Valle, or 'the falls' in Afrikaans.

Day 7: Naukluft Hiking Trail

The day starts with a steep climb of about 200m to reach the top of Die Valle but a spectacular view from the top is enough to justify the climb. After this, you'll drop down into the Arbeid Adelt Valley. Six hours later, you'll reach your next camp, the Tufa shelter.

Day 8: Naukluft Hiking Trail

Today you'll head for Bakenskop, 1,950m above sea level. 600m below is the Tsondab River Valley. The view is stunning. From there you'll cross the Kapoklaagte towards the Kapoklaagte shelter.

Day 9: Naukluft Hiking Trail

This last day's trek should take between five and six hours. You'll end the day at Tsauchab River Camp with a good meal and a proper bed.

Day 10: Tsauchab - Windhoek (285 Km)

You'll leave Tsauchab after a long leisurely breakfast and drive back to Windhoek.

Details

Getting there

You need to get to Hosea Kutako Airport, Windhoek. There are flights from most major UK airports.

Price includes

Transfer from and to the airport at Windhoek, guided trek (itinerary as outlined), food.

Price details

Price quoted above is based on three sharing. Single supplement available for NAD2000

When is best

Scheduled departure: 2 - 9 March 2011

Other departures available from March - October.

Available

Mar—Oct

Typical Duration

10 days

Comfort level

Down to earth (hostels, camping, huts)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed