



Compass Odyssey

Southern Africa Safari

(escorted and accommodated)

19 days/18 nights

19 September – 7 October, 2011

AU\$6190 p.p.

Join writer, photographer, tour guide and Compass Odyssey co-founder, Darren (Crusty) Humphrys on our 2011 Southern Africa Safari visiting Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Southern Africa is a vibrant, rustic and exciting region of intriguing culture, mesmerizing landscapes, fantastic wildlife, and memorable experiences. It is also a region of contrasts that in a moment's glance can present the interested onlooker with a collage of both tradition and modernity, as well as wealth and poverty. Journey to southern Africa today and you can still marvel at the quintessential African images of endless plains, acacia trees, stunning sunsets, wild animals, African tribesmen, and pulsating townships. However, the region also offers much more than the stereotype, boasting one of the world's oldest - but still very much living - deserts, and a vast network of rivers that have ebbed and flowed since the beginning of humankind. Home to a fifth of Africa's people, southern Africa also boasts the continent's most diverse palette of cultures, languages and beliefs. Southern Africa is filled with unforgettable travel experiences just waiting for you to embrace, and we welcome you to come join us on our journey through this wonderful region.

The per person cost is based on two adults travelling together, and is quoted in Australian dollars. For other currencies, we will use the current conversion rate at the time of your payment. Should you be travelling solo, we do charge a single supplement but will first try to match you up with a fellow solo traveller should you wish. No special level of fitness is required to enjoy our safari, except for our guided desert walk in the Namib Desert (see Day 3).



Compass Odyssey

Southern Africa Safari

SAFARI OVERVIEW

- Day 1: Welcome to southern Africa, welcome to Windhoek
- Day 2: Namib-Naukluft National Park
- Day 3: Namib Desert
- Day 4: Walvis Bay & Swakopmund
- Day 5: Swakopmund
- Day 6: Damaraland
- Day 7: Brandberg Mountain, Damaraland
- Day 8: Etosha National Park
- Day 9: Etosha National Park
- Day 10: Etosha National Park
- Day 11: Kavango River, Namibia & Angola
- Day 12: Okavango Delta Panhandle, Botswana
- Day 13: Zambezi River, Namibia
- Day 14: Chobe River, Botswana
- Day 15: Chobe River, Botswana
- Day 16: Zambezi River & Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
- Day 17: Zambezi River & Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe
- Day 18: Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe & Livingstone, Zambia
- Day 19: Farewell southern Africa



Compass Odyssey

Southern Africa Safari

SAFARI DETAILS

Dates: 19 September – 7 October, 2011

Duration: 19 days/18 nights

Cost: AU\$6190 p.p. (twin share)
AU\$920 (single supplement)

Group Size: Minimum 10, Maximum 16

Included: All transport, meals and twin share accommodation as per itinerary
Entrance to Namib-Naukluft N.P., Etosha N.P., Chobe N.P., Victoria Falls N.P., Zambezi N.P. & Mosi oa Tunya N.P.
Entrance to Livingstone Museum
Namib Desert and Sesriem Canyon walk with specialist guide
Brandberg Mountain rock art walk with specialist guide
Chobe N.P. game drive with specialist guide
Victoria Falls walk with specialist guide
Mosi oa Tunya N.P. game walk with specialist guide and park ranger
Etosha N.P. "Night" game drive with park ranger
Damaraland game drive with local guide
Angolan village visit with local guide
Chobe River, Okavango River and Zambezi River boat cruises
Fully escorted tour with experienced guide, Darren (Crusty) Humphrys
Arrival (Windhoek) & departure (Victoria Falls) airport transfers
Gratuities for all guides, drivers, domestics, and wait staff

Not Included: International airfares and accompanying airport/airline taxes

Any meals not included in the itinerary

Personal travel insurance

All other personal expenses, such as laundry and drinks with meals

SAFARI ITINERARY

Day 1: Monday, 19 September

Welcome to southern Africa

Windhoek is Namibia's capital - a small and friendly city with a population of around 300,000 and a pleasant year-round climate with little rain. We are fully aware that arriving into Africa can be a little overwhelming at first glance, and we are therefore intent on making sure you feel comfortable and secure from the moment you arrive. We greet you at Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport - named in honour of one of the original opponents to South African rule after WWI - and assist you with exchanging some money into Namibian Dollars (NAD) before heading to our lodge, Arebbusch Travel Lodge.

Staying in Windhoek tonight allows us to acclimatise - which can take a day or two due to the uncomfortable combination of the city's relatively high altitude (1,665m or 5,460ft) and the long-haul flight most clients endure to get here - and settle into a relaxed, healthy rhythm before the commencement of our safari. Arebbusch Travel Lodge sits in peaceful, natural *bushveld* on the banks of the dry Arebbusch River, on the edge of the city.

Tonight we have a relaxed dinner prepared by our on-board cook who will accompany us for the duration of our safari. Darren will also give a short talk covering all the necessary information to help you feel comfortable with being in southern Africa, along with a brief overview of the itinerary for the next 19 days. The beer drinkers amongst us may also wish to begin their field research into the range of local beers available.

(Dinner included)

Accommodation:

Arebbusch Travel Lodge (www.arebbusch.com)

Day 2: Tuesday, 20 September

Namib-Naukluft National Park

We leave Windhoek behind for a wonderful day's scenic drive to Sesreim and the dunes of the Namib Desert. Travelling mostly on graded, gravel roads, we initially climb up the Khomas Hochland Range before continuing across Namibia's Central Highlands. Descending down into the Namib-Naukluft Valley via the spectacular Remhoogte Pass, we will pause to take in the panoramic mountain vistas. The scenery remains stunning as we approach the easternmost edge of the country's famed desert dunes, where sand and savannah meet and free roaming wildlife such as springbok, oryx (also called *gemsbok*) and ostrich can often be seen. We reach our accommodation - located close to the village of Sesreim and the entrance to Namib-Naukluft National Park - by late afternoon, in time to settle in and enjoy the sunset. We stay two nights here, in the vicinity of one of the world's oldest and driest desert regions, soaking up the harsh yet beautiful landscape. Our secluded camp offers unique, luxury units with uninterrupted views of the surrounding landscape, and provides us with the perfect, serene end to our day's drive while enjoying our dinner under a sheet of stars.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

The Desert Camp (www.desertcamp.com)

The Namib Desert

The Namib-Naukluft National Park, one of the biggest game reserves in southern Africa, grew to its present size over a period of 90 years and encompasses almost 50,000km². The park lies within the Namib Desert, a long, narrow desert varying in width from 100km to 150km and stretching 2,000km along the west coast of southern Africa, from the Olifants River in South Africa to the Carunjamba River in Angola. Influenced by the region's high air pressure zones and the cold Benguela current that originates in the Antarctic, the Namib Desert, though small in comparison to the Sahara (3% its size) has mountains, huge dune areas called sand seas, extensive gravel plains with rock outcrops (inselbergs), and coastal salt pans.

The Namib - as it is popularly abbreviated - boasts all the dune types usually found in larger deserts, including barchan, linear and star forms as well as a host of intermediate varieties. They create the Namib's atmosphere and are constantly changing as a result of the winds. In the early morning light, the dunes come to life with a variety of colours, shapes and sizes. As the sun approaches its zenith in the often cloudless sky, so the shadows disappear and the temperature rises. The incoming solar energy radiates relentlessly on the sea of sand and it doesn't require much imagination to realise how insignificant we people are and how easily we could perish in this vast expanse of seemingly endless sand without water or shelter. As the afternoon progresses, the sun loses its strength, shadows re-appear, and mammals, reptiles, birds and insects emerge again after the heat of the day.

Both fog (from the cold Benguela current) and dew (resulting from cold night-time temperatures) supply water to many plants and animals in the Namib. The hardy Namib dune grass *Stipagrostis sabulicola* has an extensive mat of roots just below the surface of the sand that absorbs the fog or dew moisture. Ants, beetles, snakes, lizards and birds take advantage of the water that has condensed on plants, rocks and other cold surfaces. Snakes and geckos even drink the water that has condensed on their bodies. The Namib is famous for its "head-standing" beetles *Onymaricus unguicularis*, which utilise the midnight fog by facing into the wind and lowering its head, allowing fog condensing on its body to flow downwards into the reaches of its mouth.

The hamlet of Sesriem developed around the old house on Sesreim farm. Originally a campsite was the only accommodation in the area but over the years this has been joined by a number of establishments to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors. The trees in this area are mostly camel thorns (*Acacia erioloba*), and on a hot day they provide some welcome shade for humans, as well as birds such as the Dusky Sunbird, Pied Barbet, Ashy Tit, Titbabbler, Scaly-feathered Finch, Masked Weaver and the numerous Cape Sparrow. Raptors in the area include Red-necked and Lanner Falcon, Pale Chanting Goshawk, and the Lappet-faced Vulture that can sometimes be seen soaring overhead. At night, listen out for the haunting call of the Spotted Eagle Owl, while during the day you may hear the flocks of Namaqua Sandgrouse as they fly overhead in search of water.

Day 3: Wednesday, 21 September

Namib Desert

This morning we are treated to a fascinating early morning guided "Bushman" walk of the desert dunes around Sossusvlei and Dead Vlei. Walking slowly through the desert sands, our local expert guide shows us that the Namib Desert is alive and thriving with specialised animal and plant life.

As we travel down the valley of the usually dry Tsauchab River to Sossusvlei, we are dwarfed on either side by huge star dunes. At times, we pass close to groves of dead camel thorn trees, testimony to a bygone era when there was much more water. The name "Sossus" originates from the tribal Nama language, and refers to a "gathering place of water". "Vlei" is a southern African term for a hollow or pan of water.

After a mid-day rest back at our luxury camp, we again accompany our local guide to Sesreim Canyon. The canyon has been known for centuries, and to the early inhabitants it was an important water source in an otherwise waterless area. Even during very dry times, water can be found in the canyon's upper reaches, where the deep clefts reduce evaporation. Our guide will take us on a journey back into the Tertiary period (65 - 2 million years ago), as he points out the steep canyon walls and various rock layers.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Accommodation: The Desert Camp (www.desertcamp.com)

Day 4: Thursday, 22 September

Walvis Bay & Swakopmund

We now travel to Namibia's barren Atlantic coastline, via the stunning Gaub and Kuiseb mountain passes. Reaching the coast by mid-afternoon, we stop for lunch on the shores of Walvis Bay before making our way north to Namibia's quaint resort town, Swakopmund. After a relatively full day of travel, tonight we give everyone the 'night off' and dine at one of the town's most popular restaurants, renowned for its nightly selection of fresh seafood.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Accommodation: Alte Brücke (www.altebruecke.com)

The Ramsar-listed Walvis Bay Wetlands hold a minimum of 70,000 to 100,000 birds during the winter months (June to October), including significant populations of waterfowl, such as Chestnut-banded Plover, Black-necked Grebe, Greater and Lesser Flamingo, and African Black Oystercatcher. Besides the local and intra-African birds, this is also an extremely important wintering ground for Palaearctic birds that arrive from the beginning of September and leave again in March/April to breed in the northern hemisphere.

Founded in 1892 as the main harbour for German South West Africa, Swakopmund still retains a colonial charm through the many examples of German architecture to be found on a wander through the town centre. Our accommodation is located on the southern edge of the town near the mouth of the Swakop River and the beach. In a town generally devoid of any tropical lushness, Alte Brücke is justifiably proud of its fully-lawned resort and we stay in their spacious self-catering chalets for the next three nights.

Day 5: Friday, 23 September

Swakopmund

Today is yours to explore Swakopmund. The town centre has some fascinating bookshops, interesting antique shops, and cosy cafes as well as a great *curio* (souvenir) market down by the town's lighthouse, where artefacts from Central, Eastern and Southern Africa can be found. Long beach strolls and some birdwatching at the river mouth can also be fitted into the day should you wish.

After a pleasant and restful day, we meet up again for dinner at another popular restaurant, overlooking the town's jetty and lighthouse.

(Breakfast & dinner included)

Accommodation: Alte Brücke (www.altebruecke.com)

Day 6: Saturday, 24 September

Damaraland

We now leave the coast and travel into Damaraland and the transition zone between the Namib Desert and Savannah regions of central Namibia. This afternoon we will be taken on a guided game drive where we will be able to fully appreciate the region's diversity, hopefully encountering the famed desert-adapted elephants that frequent the valley at this time of the year.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Accommodation: Brandberg White Lady Lodge (www.brandbergwillodge.com)

Damaraland is endowed with a rich biological diversity – representing 40% of the mammal and reptile species and 10% of plant species recorded in Namibia. Rising up from the plains here is Brandberg Mountain, the country's highest at 2,573m (8,441ft.) and it is within its shadow that we stay for the next two nights at our lodge, situated in the Ugab River valley.

Day 7: Sunday, 25 September

Brandberg Mountain, Damaraland

This morning we will take the short drive to Brandberg Mountain, where a trained guide from the local community will show us around the numerous rock art sites. This afternoon we can relax back at our lodge, taking in the serenity that surrounds this dry valley.

(Breakfast & dinner included)

Accommodation: Brandberg White Lady Lodge (www.brandbergwillodge.com)

Brandberg Mountain stands out as an imposing feature in the otherwise flat gravel plains of Damaraland. The Brandberg is one of a series of ring complexes of the Etendeka volcanic succession that intruded into the surrounding bedrock of the current Namib plain at the break-up of western Gondwanaland into the African and South American continents, more than 130 million years ago. The Brandberg itself is composed of a circular series of granite intrusions that marks the remains of an enormous volcano that has been reduced by a hundred million years of erosion. Brandberg has an exceptionally rich palaeo-archaeological heritage with a high concentration of prehistoric rock art (more than 43,000 paintings and 900 sites alone). The two genres of rock art (engravings and paintings) are found in close association here, and more than 120 archaeological sites have been recorded. The Brandberg is home to the famous rock art frieze of the "White Lady", the authors and meaning of which has puzzled researchers, as well as numerous other friezes of exceptional quality. The mountain forms part of numerous destinations along prehistoric migration routes of people who migrated seasonally between the coast and the interior, and for centuries was clearly an important focus of culture and socio-economic activity for the indigenous people of Namibia. For years the local community experienced little benefit from the stream of visitors to 'their' mountain, which they call *Daureb*, meaning "Burnt Mountain". However after a government initiative, selected members of the community have been trained as specialist rock art guides and our time with one of them this morning will be both enlightening and beneficial.

Day 8: Monday, 26 September

Etosha National Park, Okaukuejo Restcamp

We now venture north to Namibia's – and one of Africa's – premier wildlife viewing areas, Etosha National Park.

(Breakfast and dinner included)

Accommodation: Okaukuejo Restcamp (www.nwr.com.na/okaukuejo_camp.html)

We stay two nights within the park's renowned restcamps and a third night at a lodge on the park's border. Found within each park restcamp is a restaurant, café, bar, small shop selling supplies and souvenirs, swimming pool, and information centre. On the perimeter of each camp is a waterhole that at night is floodlit, enabling you to stay up all night viewing the waterhole 'traffic' should you wish. The wildlife viewing in Etosha National Park is generally excellent, and during our days in the park we can expect to see numerous antelope species, along with elephant, giraffe, rhino and hopefully lion. We may also be fortunate enough to spot leopard and cheetah. There is a network of roads linking the three campsites and subsidiary roads lead to various waterholes.

Etosha National Park

Etosha, meaning "Great White Place", is dominated by a massive mineral pan. The pan was originally a lake fed by the Kunene River, which is part of the Kalahari Basin - the floor of which was formed around 1,000 million years ago. However the course of the river changed thousands of years ago and the lake dried up. The Etosha Pan covers around 25% of the park, and for most of the year is a large dusty depression of salt and dusty clay that only fills if the rains are heavy, and even then only holds water for a short time. This temporary water in the Etosha Pan attracts thousands of wading birds including impressive flocks of flamingos. The perennial springs along the edges of the Etosha Pan draw large concentrations of wildlife and birds. A San legend about the formation of the Etosha Pan tells of how a village was raided and everyone but the women slaughtered. One woman was so upset about the death of her family she cried until her tears formed a massive lake. When the lake dried up nothing was left apart from a huge white pan.

For centuries, Etosha was utilized for grazing and hunting by resident tribespeople, as well as the indigenous nomadic San hunters & gatherers. It was unknown to Europeans until 1851, when Swedish explorer Charles John Andersson and his companion Francis Galton (an English scientist and cousin of Charles Darwin) explored the vast wilderness. Many more travellers passed through in the following years, some of whom had left the Boer Transvaal Republic and crossed the harsh interior of the Kalahari Desert in search of a new promised land in Damaraland. Etosha and the surrounding areas also became known as a hunter's paradise, and it was not until 1907 that Dr. F. von Lindequist, Governor of then German South West Africa, expressed concern over the diminishing numbers of wildlife. Although he subsequently proclaimed a reserve of almost 100,000km² (38,600m²) for the protection of indigenous plants and animals, in reality the reserve was too big to manage. There were no fences or physical boundaries, resulting in the wildlife being at risk when they crossed the invisible boundary, and farming and trading was still permitted within the reserve.

Etosha National Park gradually reduced in size until its current range of 22,270km² (8,600m²) - still one of the Africa's largest and most important wildlife reserves. During the dry winter months (June-October), the grazing populations of Etosha National Park migrate to established waterholes - some of the best of which are located adjacent to the restcamps themselves and are floodlit for all-night viewing. The Pan and the surrounding savannah plains are home to 114 mammal species, over 100 resident bird species (with over another 200 seasonal visitors), 110 reptile species, 16 amphibian species and, surprisingly, one species of fish. This animal life is sustained only because of underground springs that form waterholes on the outskirts of the pan. Without a subterranean water table and the numerous places where it reaches the surface, little wildlife would be attracted to the region. There are indications, however, that the climate may be changing. Rainfall has been declining for the past 20 years in Etosha and as a result, large herbivores have become more widely dispersed in search of grazing, and subsequently the predators also seem to be ignoring their previous range limits to widen their search for prey. Lion pride structure in particular has become loose, with some individuals recorded travelling huge distances.

Day 9: Tuesday, 27 September

Etosha National Park, Halali Restcamp

Today we enjoy a full day's wildlife viewing within Etosha, taking full advantage of the superior height and wide viewing area of our overland safari vehicle. We stop half way through the park at our overnight accommodation, Halali Restcamp with its floodlit waterhole set amongst the mopane trees and dolomite *koppies* (hills) surrounding the camp. Tonight we board one of the park's open-sided 4x4s for a "Night" game drive.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Halali Restcamp (www.nwr.com.na/halali_camp.html)

An exclusive experience only recently offered by Etosha National Park, the "Night" game drive departs after Halali's gates have been closed to the general public and the park is void of all vehicle traffic. During the spotlight drive, we are afforded the chance of prime wildlife viewing guided by an experienced park ranger. We hope to see some of southern Africa's elusive nocturnal wildlife, such as civet, genet and leopard, and can also be on the lookout for the elusive day/night duo of lion and hyena.

Day 10: Wednesday, 28 September

Etosha National Park, Mokuti Lodge

Our wildlife viewing continues today, as we slowly continue east through the park. After another full day of quality wildlife viewing, we exit via the Von Lindquist Gate and enter the luxurious Mokuti Lodge, a fine place to finish our Etosha wildlife experience.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Mokuti Lodge (www.kempinski.com/mokuti)

Day 11: Thursday, 29 September

Kavango River, Namibia & Angola

In an amazing day of contrasting landscapes, today we leave the Namibian savannah and make our way to the fertile, tropical banks of the Kavango River – the natural border between Namibia and Angola. After re-supplying in the bustling frontier town of Rundu, we take the short drive to our accommodation. Our thatched bungalows look out over the Kavango River to Angola, and this afternoon we are accompanied by a guide as we cruise across the river to visit the local village.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Kaisosi River Lodge (www.kaisosiriverlodge.com)

Some of Kaisosi River Lodge's employees live "across the river" in Angolan territory. In this part of the world, no travel documents are required for cross-border travel and the employees travel freely between the two banks – and international borders – of the river. After numerous requests by clients to visit the employees' village, the lodge has established a fascinating 2-hour guided village walk. Here we have the opportunity to see African village life in its truest sense, and the villagers get to enjoy a rare meeting with westerners. The village as a whole benefits from the organised visits through an arrangement with the lodge to supply much needed school, medical, and sports supplies. Should you also wish to contribute, feel free to bring along such items and they will be sensitively distributed to the village chief.

Day 12: Friday, 30 September

Okavango River, Botswana

This morning we follow the course of the Kavango River, travelling east through Namibia's Caprivi region before veering south into Botswana and to the small village of Shakawe. Our lodge stands on the bank of the Okavango River (the Botswana portion of the Kavango), and has a long and colourful history from its beginnings as a fishing camp back in 1969. This afternoon we enjoy a 3-hour boat ride to explore the surrounding waterways and seek out some of this region's diverse bird life.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Shakawe Lodge

The Okavango Panhandle is the main watercourse supplying the Okavango Delta. The Panhandle is a 70km stretch of the Okavango River from where the river enters Botswana until it fans out into the Delta. Fishing in the Panhandle's deep and fast-flowing channels is popular, as is bird watching in the region's tall, shady, riverine forests and along the riverbank.

Day 13: Saturday, 1 October

Zambezi River, Namibia

Today we return to Namibia and travel further through the Caprivi region to the border town of Katima Mulilo. The Caprivi region is an area steeped in wetland wildlife and cultural tradition, and as yet is generally undisturbed by western influences. Our accommodation overlooks the Zambezi River and affords beautiful river views, bird life and is set in a tranquil garden under the shade of tall indigenous trees. This evening we can enjoy a sundowner drink while watching the river life and the spectacular sun-sets for which the Caprivi is famous.

(Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Caprivi River Lodge (www.capriviriverlodge.com)

Day 14: Sunday, 2 October

Chobe River, Botswana

We again travel from Namibia to Botswana today, as our short journey takes us to the town of Kasane on the banks of the Chobe River. The afternoon is ours to soak up some Botswanan sun and enjoy the amenities and river views of our lodge. Tonight we are usually serenaded to sleep by the nearby pods of hippo venturing out of the water for their nightly graze.

(Breakfast and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Chobe Safari Lodge (www.chobesafarilodge.com)

The Three Rivers - Chobe, Okavango-Kavango, Zambezi

The Chobe River runs along the northern border of Chobe National Park. It rises in the northern Angolan highlands, where it is called the Kwando (a Hambukushu name), and travels enormous distances through Kalahari sands before reaching Botswana, where it becomes the Linyanti (a Subiya name) until it reaches Ngoma where it becomes the Chobe. Like the Okavango (called "Kavango" where it forms the border between Angola and Namibia) and Zambezi, the Chobe's course is affected by fault lines, which are extensions of East Africa's Great Rift Valley. These three mighty rivers carry more water than all the other rivers in southern Africa. There is a close association between the Okavango, the Chobe and the Zambezi. The Okavango River is connected to the Chobe and Zambezi via the Selinda Spillway where high floods from the Okavango escape from the southern end of the Panhandle and flow into the Chobe. A current theory holds that millions of years ago the Okavango, Chobe and Upper Zambezi flowed as one huge river across the middle Kalahari, joined the Limpopo River and emptied into the Indian Ocean. Earth movements stopped this flow and caused a damming back of the river and the formation of the Linyanti Swamps.

Unlike most rivers, the Okavango – which has its source in the highlands of central Angola – never reaches the sea. Instead it spills out onto the sands of the Kalahari Basin to create a delta oasis in the desert. The mosaic of channels, islands, lagoons, and forests that have resulted support a wealth of wildlife including large carnivores, great herds of elephant, and spectacular birds.

The Chobe River first flows directly south, twisting and turning through swamps of wide reed and papyrus beds, forming hidden lagoons, which sometimes fill with water lilies. Its south bank alternates from open flood plains dotted with pans to thick woodlands. At the village of Diyei, the former capital of the Bayei people, it is caught by a rift, drops out onto a swamp and then turns north through Lake Liambezi, finally turning east and passing Kasane before joining the Zambezi at Kazungula. They flow briefly together before spilling over the deep cataract at *Mosi-oa-Tunya* (Victoria Falls).

The Zambezi River is Africa's fourth largest river system, after the Nile, Congo and Niger rivers. Running for a length of 2700kms, it begins its journey as an insignificant little spring in the corner of north-west Zambia in the Mwinilunga District. It bubbles up between the roots of a tree, very close to the border where Zambia, Angola and D.R. Congo meet. It eventually runs through six countries on its journey to the Indian Ocean, and the Zambezi's unique value is that it's less developed than others in terms of human settlement, with many areas along its banks afforded protected status.

Day 15: Monday, 3 October

Chobe River, Botswana

Today we anticipate some of the best wildlife viewing of our safari. This morning we board our lodge's custom-designed river boat for an exclusive 3-hour wildlife cruise on the Chobe River, while later in the day we enter Chobe National Park for an afternoon game drive in our 4x4 safari vehicles.

(Breakfast and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Chobe Safari Lodge (www.chobesafarilodge.com)

A major feature of Chobe National Park is its elephant population. The Chobe elephants comprise part of what is probably the largest surviving continuous elephant population. This population covers most of northern Botswana plus north-western Zimbabwe. Botswana's elephant population is currently estimated at around 120,000. This elephant population has built up steadily from a few thousand since the early 1900s and largely escaped the massive illegal poaching that decimated other populations in the 1970s and 1980s.

Day 16: Tuesday, 4 October

Zambezi River & Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

This morning we journey into Zimbabwe and the vibrant village of Victoria Falls. Our comfortable lodge is located away from the busy village centre and tonight we will experience one of southern Africa's best known dining experiences, located within the lodge grounds.

(Breakfast and dinner included)

Accommodation:

Lokuthula Lodges

(www.lokuthulalodges.com)

We stay in the town of "Vic Falls" for 3 nights at Lokuthula Lodges. In the local isiNdebele tongue, Lokuthula means "Place of Peace", an apt name for these well-appointed lodges set in tranquil, indigenous gardens where elephant roam and warthogs kneel to mow the lush lawns. Situated within the Victoria Falls Safari Lodge resort estate just 4km from the centre of Vic Falls, Lokuthula is surrounded by 80,000 hectares of unspoilt African bush and borders the unfenced Zambezi National Park. A nearby waterhole facilitates free passage of wildlife, including buffalo, elephant, hyena and a variety of plains game, between the park and the lodges. Each 2-bedroomed lodge is split-level and open fronted with blinds, affording magnificent views of unspoilt bush. Within the estate grounds is "The Boma - Place of Eating", a culinary adventure combining the tastes, sights, sounds and smells of Africa with the warm hospitality of Zimbabwe. The Boma specialises in a superb selection of traditional Zimbabwean dishes, as well as fish and vegetarian meals. Customs, such as beer-tasting and pre-dinner hand washing, are integral to The Boma experience, as is vibrant African song, drum and dance. A witchdoctor adds mystique to the evening, which ends on an invitation to while away the evening with the restaurant's *sangoma* - a traditional healer and story teller.

The quaint Victoria Falls settlement - just ten minutes from the Falls, and on the outskirts of the game-rich Zambezi National Park - is a bustling hive of activity, with the village rightly claiming the title of "Adrenaline Capital of Africa". Although home to a seemingly endless variety of adventure sports from bungee jumping and helicopter flights to canoeing and white-water rafting, Vic Falls still has a gracious, pioneering, colonial atmosphere and has remained largely unaffected from Zimbabwe's economic and political troubles. Most of the country's safari areas (including Victoria Falls) are still in great condition, boasting shops stocked with food, and readily available fuel. Payment for all goods and services can now be in U.S. dollars or South African rand. Amongst all the conflicting news coming out of Zimbabwe, recent visitors say the country is still one of southern Africa's most beautiful. And despite being forced to sacrifice so much, Zimbabweans have not lost their humour nor their resolve. With so few travellers or businessmen visiting the country, those who do make the journey can expect almost royal treatment. While the world's media focuses on the fall of Zimbabwe, visitors will see a very different image of the country - that of a country of charm, political intrigue and magnificent wilderness.

Day 17: Wednesday, 5 October

Zambezi River & Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

We start today with an early rise and a serene boat cruise along the Zambezi River, followed by a mid-morning guided walk of the Zimbabwean side of the Victoria Falls. Later this afternoon, we visit a bygone era when we partake in a colonial High Tea at the grand Victoria Falls Hotel. Lunch and dinner today is at your own discretion, allowing you the freedom to explore the markets, shops and restaurants of Vic Falls town as well as enjoy the peaceful surrounds of our accommodation.

(Breakfast and High Tea included)

Accommodation:

Lokuthula Lodges

(www.lokuthulalodges.com)

This morning's 2-hour "Breakfast Cruise" on the Zambezi River is perfect for the early riser and a wonderful opportunity for keen birders. As well as enjoying an on-board cooked breakfast, fruit, muffins, tea, coffee and orange juice, this is also a beautiful time of the day to be on the river as there is less boat traffic, affording us a real sense of privacy.

Described in the 1800s by the local maKololo tribe as *Mosi oa Tunya* - "the Smoke that Thunders" and in more modern terms as "the greatest known curtain of falling water", the Victoria Falls are a spectacular sight of awe-inspiring beauty and grandeur on the Zambezi River, a World Heritage Site bordering Zambia and Zimbabwe. Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone first heard about *Mosi oa Tunya* a full four years before he arrived there. The area was by then a sacred site for the local tribes. On 17 November, 1855 Chief Sekeletu of the maKololo paddled Livingstone to an island in the Zambezi, known as Goat Island. Although the water was low at the time, it's little wonder that he felt a "tremor of fear" as he approached the wall of spray. Gazing down into the churning chasm below must have been a heart-stopping experience. Although it would be fair to presume that other 'white men' had witnessed the Falls before him (Portuguese slave traders, for example), the first written description of the Falls is accredited to Livingstone, and includes "No one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England. It had never been seen before by European eyes; but scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight." 1,708m (5,600ft) wide and 108m (360ft) high, columns of spray can be seen from miles away as millions of cubic metres of water plummet every minute over the edge. The wide basalt cliff, over which the falls thunder, transforms the Zambezi from a wide placid river to a ferocious torrent cutting through a series of dramatic gorges. Facing the Falls on the Zimbabwean side, within the border of the compact Victoria Falls National Park, is another sheer wall of basalt, rising to the same height and capped by mist-soaked rainforest. A path along the edge of the rainforest provides the visitor who is prepared to brave the tremendous spray with an unparalleled series of views of the Falls. This morning we will be accompanied through the rainforest by a qualified guide who will impart a history of the Falls while also detailing the local botany, wildlife and other points of interest. Once finished, we are welcome to further explore the Victoria Falls National Park and enjoy the views of the Falls.

Established in 1904, and recently redecorated, the colonial-style Victoria Falls Hotel is set in lush tropical gardens and epitomizes the romance of grand travel. For over 100 years now, the hotel has been welcoming visiting members of Royal families, international and local statesmen, and worldwide celebrities. Overlooking the Victoria Falls Bridge and the gorges below, the elegant decor and olde world charm of this gracious hotel is reflected in the wide colonial verandas and various dining rooms such as the Livingstone Room and Stanley's Terrace. This afternoon we visit Stanley's Terrace for traditional High Tea, perhaps washed down by one of the hotel's famous Livingstone cocktails or a gin and tonic whilst listening to the mighty roar of the Falls.

Day 18: Thursday, 6 October

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe & Livingstone, Zambia

We again start the day with an early rise as we travel from Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe to Livingstone, Zambia. Necessitating border formalities, the short journey includes crossing the Victoria Falls bridge, affording us with another view of the mighty Falls. On the Zambian side of the Falls is the Mosi oa Tunya National Park, and this morning we explore the park on foot on a guided "Rhino Walk". Afterwards, we venture into Livingstone town to visit the Livingstone Museum and enjoy lunch in this bustling, African town. Returning to Zimbabwe and Vic Falls town by early afternoon, we meet again later in the day for an evening game drive and exclusive bush dinner in the natural *bushveld* bordering our accommodation.

(Breakfast, lunch & dinner included)

Accommodation:

Lokuthula Lodges

(www.lokuthulalodges.com)

Mosi oa Tunya National Park is situated along the upper Zambezi above the Falls and at 66km², is one of the smallest in Zambia. The park's compactness affords us a wonderful opportunity for quality, close-up viewing of larger mammals such as kudu, impala, zebra, giraffe, warthog, as well as white rhino. Elephants are also often seen as they cross the Zambezi and freely walk through the park and the surrounding area. The highlight of our visit to Mosi oa Tunya National Park is the "Rhino Walk". Only two groups of eight people are permitted to track the park's rhino by foot each day. We arrive at the park just after dawn, having made our way from our accommodation in Vic Falls. Our local guide, accompanied by an armed park ranger, then walks us slowly through the bush following the *spoor* (track) of the rhino. We often locate at least one of the park's rhinos from very close range, and it's very exciting to be able to observe this powerful animal from just a few metres away. During the walk our guide will also share his intimate knowledge of the park's botany, especially the traditional and medicinal uses of the trees and plants we encounter. A morning tea in the bush rounds off an exciting morning in the park.

Livingstone Museum is Zambia's biggest and oldest museum, dating back to the 1930s. It has numerous galleries, offering lots of photos and cultural displays. The Archaeology Gallery describes human evolution and cultural development in Zambia from Stone Age to Iron Age. The Ethnography and Art Gallery shows objects relating to the different cultures of the country including handicrafts, musical instruments. The History Gallery includes the origins of the Bantu people, the development of British colonial rule and the attainment of independence. It also houses a large collection of David Livingstone memorabilia, donated by the Livingstone family. There is also an extensive library with books ranging from archaeology, wildlife and also some of Livingstone's journals.

This evening's game drive is conducted in open-sided 4x4 safari vehicles equipped with spotlights and led by a qualified ranger/guide. Beginning with sundowners and soaking up another African sunset, we then explore the surrounding wildlife reserve on the lookout for elusive nocturnal animals such as genet and civet, or perhaps a herd of buffalo. Our final dinner together is an open-air affair overlooking a waterhole, a perfect setting for us to toast our crew for a job well done, and reflect on a journey that has shown us an amazing diversity of landscapes, provided a wealth of wildlife experiences, and given us a great affection for this part of Africa and her people.

Day 19: Friday, 7 October

Farewell southern Africa

This morning there may be time for optional activities such as a helicopter or microlight flight over the Falls (US\$120-US\$245 p.p.), before we take the short drive to Victoria Falls International Airport for our flight to Johannesburg and connecting international flights.

(Breakfast included)

During your safari with us through southern Africa, you will have witnessed natural and wild beauty, learnt about our diverse cultures and history, and experienced genuine African hospitality. We have a deep affection for this part of Africa, and we're sure you'll feel the same after travelling on this Compass Odyssey journey with us.

Sala kakuhle! ('goodbye, stay well')

YOUR ESCORT

For the duration of our safari you will be escorted by writer, photographer, tour guide and Compass Odyssey co-founder, Darren (Crusty) Humphrys. Darren joined the Aussie backpacker pilgrimage to London back in 1987, and has been wandering around the globe ever since. In 1997 he travelled on an overland tour through eastern and southern Africa. A “life-changing” experience, he loved it so much that by the end of the tour he already had a job as a guide. Since then he has been leading tours through much of Africa and the Middle East for various travel companies including Compass Odyssey, which is the passion of Darren and his partner, Kate. Compass Odyssey (www.compassodyssey.net) is a multi-faceted company specialising in sustainable travel and tourism that provides memorable experiences for each traveller, whilst making positive contributions to the environment and communities in which they travel. Through his intensive guiding for over a decade now, Darren has a deep knowledge of southern Africa’s mammals and birdlife, and also harbours a keen interest in the region’s history, and the current events shaping their future. Darren is also the author of the prestigious *Frommer's Morocco* guidebook, and co-author of the latest *Footprint Namibia* guidebook, whilst his photographic images have appeared in the *Bradt Nigeria* guidebook, and numerous international magazines including *Geographical*, *Time Out*, and *Africa Geographic*.

Southern Africa’s history, culture, arts & crafts, customs, religion, cuisine, and music will be brought to life in Darren’s renowned enthusiastic, yet easy-going and respectful manner. Darren and Kate’s understanding of both southern African and Western cultures, combined with their immense (and current) range of contacts within the region’s tourism, accommodation, and restaurant sectors, assures Compass Odyssey clients of a fascinating safari studded with unique experiences, memorable moments, and authentic encounters that benefit both local and visitor.

Compass Odyssey also uses the services of specialist local guides as much as possible, bringing to the safari their individual passion and personality that only serves to strengthen the essence of a Compass Odyssey journey.



Accommodation

All accommodation is in double or twin-bed rooms with en-suite facilities. The accommodation styles include thatched cottages and *rondavels*, Meru-style safari tents, and atmospheric guestrooms. All bedding and bath towels are provided.

There is no camping on our safari.

Transport and Driving Time

We are travelling in our very comfortable and spacious vehicle that has been custom-built for overland safaris. Designs of overland safari vehicles have been evolving for over 20 years, with the current 'luxury' versions like ours being completely self-contained, with ample storage space for cooking equipment, food stocks and luggage, along with long-range fuel tanks. Inside you'll find 16 forward-facing reclining seats with ample head and leg room, large sliding windows providing superb all-round vision, battery-operated fridge & freezer, cooler box (esky), stereo, a safe for your personal valuables, personal lockers, and a small library stocked with wildlife guides and other informative publications. In addition, the vehicle also carries a range of spare parts and tyres, and our driver is an experienced mechanic.

We are covering a lot of territory during our safari. We have, however tried to keep to a minimum those days in our itinerary in which the majority of the day is dedicated to driving to our particular destination, and even those days will be interspersed with one or two sightseeing stops along the way. All the other days generally involve minimal driving and maximum experience. We always stop regularly for refreshment and toilet breaks, usually at roadside service stations or small, family-run food stalls called *padstals*. It's also worth noting that of our eleven different overnight stops once we depart from Windhoek, six are multiple-night stays and three are only a short distance from each other within Etosha National Park.

Meals

Our meals on safari are provided by an eclectic mix of accommodations and restaurants, specially chosen (and happily researched) by us, along with our camp meals prepared by our own on-board cook. Those meals that aren't included in our itinerary have been specifically omitted, as they occur at a time or place when/where we feel you will prefer the freedom of choice.

Breakfast usually consists of cereals, toast, fruit, tea, coffee and juice plus cooked eggs with sometimes bacon or sausages. Lunch, be it a roadside picnic or within our accommodation, is usually cold meats, salad, cheese, bread rolls and juice. Dinners range from delicious informal meals around the campfire to a multiple-course feast at "The Boma - Place of Eating".

An on-board honesty tab system operates for beer and soft drinks from the often replenished cooler box, and we always have a handy supply of complimentary sweet & savoury biscuits and fresh fruit. We regularly stop for fresh food supplies where you are also welcome to purchase other beverages (wine, spirits) and snacks.

Please advise us prior to the tour's departure of any special dietary or medical needs, so that we can plan ahead.