



[Current Articles](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

Piara Strainge: Why Namibia is My Number One [Guest Blog]

Posted on Tue, Jul 23, 2013 @ 06:50 AM

All photos and Text by guest blogger, Piara Strainge

Namibia is a richly captivating destination full of hidden gems and unassuming tourism amidst the holiday hotspots. You can self drive it or join an overland safari, either way the experience will be one you won't forget in a hurry. From the safari thrills in Etosha to the empty moonscape wilderness of the Skeleton coast, this African country is as beautiful as it is diverse.

On arrival in [Windhoek](#), as is considered tradition, I dined at the famous Joe's Beerhouse in Nelson Mandela Avenue and sampled local delicacies such as Gemsbok fillet and Kudu loin steak. There is always an abundance of good food and good beer to be had here whilst you look on in admiration at the range of memorabilia housed in and around the bar and lapas.



Elephant in Etosha

Once I was suitably watered and fed at Joe's, [Etosha](#) beckoned. This is where many people start their safari experience and being a complete game-driving junkie myself, I was itching to get going. Joining a local safari company for three days, I travelled through Okaukuejo, Halali and Namutoni. I remember the black backed jackals accompanying us at dinner around our campfire and much later in the night we would observe black rhinos at the watering holes.



My safari gang in Etosha

Every safari is different and no matter how many times you do it, there will always be that one special experience you remember above all others. Mine came at the end of Etosha. As we were leaving the National Park, the African sky turned a bluish black, thunder rumbled around us in surround sound and we spotted a male lion padding towards us. We could feel his dominant presence as he got closer and closer and suddenly he began to roar. Was he competing with the thunder, calling for his

mate, or warning us off? The atmosphere was charged. Another crack of thunder, another flash of lightning illuminating the sky, and still he kept coming, relentlessly roaring louder and louder. The heat was immense but he didn't seem to tire. When he was within shooting range, I started snapping my camera and eventually he came so close I could look into his eyes. That one-on-one turned a great safari into an awesome safari.



Male lion in Etosha

Whilst getting out of the vehicle is strictly prohibited in Etosha and most other National Parks in Africa, if the true wilderness safari experience is what you're *really* after (as I was), a visit to the Palmwag concession is a must. On this journey through [Damaraland](#) to [Palmwag Lodge](#), it was just my guide and myself and the scenery was so breathtaking, I was utterly mesmerised. The drive into the concession area was even more stunning with timid zebras and desert elephants giving the vehicle a wide berth as we made our way over rough tracks deeper and deeper into the wilds, heading for our mobile tented camp which ups sticks and moves every time the game moves, so you're always guaranteed sightings of these wary animals. That night, when I lay down to sleep in my luxury tent, I felt as if I was the last person on earth. The remoteness engulfed me and thrilled me all at the same time.

"I felt as if I was the last person on earth. The remoteness engulfed me and thrilled me all at the same time"



Palmwag concession scenery

Sightings on the game drives were privileges and I needed a lot of patience... but I was rewarded tenfold when lions, leopards and cheetahs came out to hunt, or stalk, or simply to watch. There were no jostling vehicles, no strict rules and regulations to adhere to (only common sense of course) and the opportunities for [quality wildlife shots](#) were readily available. The constant change in lighting made for very special photos. Even going to the toilet was exhilarating and never a problem. I just found myself some shrubbery, took one last check over my shoulder and away I went. And at the end of a satisfying day in the bush, my driver and guide always knew the exact spot for that [perfect sundowner](#).



Palmwag concession from the vehicle

Namibia has some great [conservation ventures](#) like [Save the Rhino Trust](#) (SRT) and the [Okonjima project](#). Tracking the rare black rhino on foot is an experience that will stay with me forever, as will being able to get just a few feet away from cheetahs and leopards at Okonjima. I loved my spacious, well-equipped rondaval in Okonjima and sitting out on the step feeding the birds (each room had a bowl of feed - a nice little touch) was magical at any time of the day.



Leopard in Okonjima

There is no better way to reflect and ponder on your travels thus far than when you are driving down the [Skeleton coast](#). We had the tunes on as we cruised through the lunar landscapes and sheer barrenness. There's a whole lot of nothing out there - but it's beautiful. Stopping the 4WD, it's worth a short walk over the dunes to the beaches, which are studded with shipwrecks as the waves relentlessly crash in. You appreciate the physical force of Mother Nature when you look along that coastline.

The time for thinking was over as we drove into [Swakopmund](#). Sitting on the edge of the Namib Desert, this German colonised seaside resort has plenty to keep all types amused. The quaint guesthouses, art galleries, museums and fascinating shops selling 19th Century artefacts are all worth a visit as you meander across town. The craft market near the lighthouse is a definite priority to pick up something a little bit different to your usual souvenirs. Swakop is the [adventure](#) capital of Namibia, so as expected there are a range of activities on offer. You can sandboard, quad bike, sky dive, take a microlight flight or hot air balloon over the desert, or simply go for an exploratory walk over the dunes.

When the day is done and the adrenaline has ceased pumping through your veins, it's time to take a break. We ate at a great restaurant situated in the jetty called the Tug. It's an actual tug complete with sea views and is a perfect way to unwind and relax after a brilliantly hectic day.

I stopped off in Okahandja for some last minute shopping as we headed east back to Windhoek. Visiting every single shack shop, I bartered like crazy and between each one, the banter never ceased.

I saw and did so much during my visit to Namibia, but there is still so much more to explore. That's why I'll be heading back to get another fix of this incredible country.



Palmwag concession zebras



About Piara Strange

Piara Strange is a writer and photographer based in the South East of England. In the summer of 2001 she began working for an adventure tour operator and, becoming quickly smitten with the travel bug, she was fortunate enough to travel all over the world for the next ten years. Now she combines her passion for globetrotting with her love of writing and photography.

For more information about Piara’s life and work, visit her website at www.piarastrange.com or follow her on Twitter @piarastrange

Tags: [Activities](#), [Adventure](#), [Guest Post](#)

Post Comment

Name

*

Email

*

Website (optional)

Comment

*

Allowed tags: <a> link, bold, <i> italics

☐ Receive email when someone replies.

☐ Subscribe to this blog by email.

Post Comment