

## The RosenWeld Adventures in Namibia – October 2022.

Margaret and I just got back from 2½ weeks in Southern Africa with friends Eric & Darla. It was a wonderful trip – actually, more like six separate trips – and too much to really write down. So instead, I'll just sketch a few memories from the key places we visited, with links to more pictures.

**Cape Town:** After a blurry 24+ hours of travel and nighttime ride to an Airbnb, it's surreal to wake up this morning in a gorgeous flat and stroll 2 blocks to a perfect white-sand beach for an espresso and gourmet breakfast at a delightful restaurant that would fit perfectly at Venice Beach – not what



I was expecting for Africa!

Later, we drive to see a colony of African Penguin; along the way, we see several shanty towns, but our layover in

South Africa is too brief for us to get much insight into the incredible income disparities that remain here. The next day, we do a magical hike up Table Mt, which has simply fantastical scenery (I keep thinking "Middle Earth" with Cape Town looking like Minas Tirith in Gondor). The mountain rises abruptly 2000' from the sea with the city fringing the beaches; the beauty is just preposterous. (More [Cape Town photos](#))



**Namib Naukluft National Park:** After a flight to Windhoek, Namibia, and many hours of driving, we are camping under the full moon near Bullsport. With few predators about, we can hike by ourselves through an incredible, arid landscape. Bizarre Quiver trees, Euphorbia and Fig trees sprout from canyon walls. It's especially exciting to see big game – Tsessebe, Mountain Zebra – while on foot, and the highlight for Margaret



and me is a late afternoon hike where we happened upon

a troupe of baboons. Initially shy, they seemed to forget us as we stood silently, and soon we had the whole band surrounding us, foraging, eating berries from a nearby bush, and munching on orange tubers. Two babies cavorted in a tree, while the huge alpha male sat imposingly, monitoring the situation from a nearby rock. It was incredible watching their activities. Suddenly the male screamed and bounded off the rock, galloping past us only 10' away, down to the river, where he shrieked at some encroachment to his territory. Absolutely thrilling!

(More [Namib Naukluft photos](#))



**Sossusvlei:** These dunes are what drew me to Namibia, and it's fantastic to finally see them in person! Bright orange, over 1000' high and stretching for thousands of square miles, it's an amazing area... And a hot one: 104 degrees when we arrive! We quickly learn: up before dawn, midday siesta, and another excursion at sunset. But the area is so vast, with all hotels outside the park gates, that we spend 4 hours driving each day, half in the dark, racing for the morning light and also to get back before the gates close. This leads to near disaster, when an Oryx lumbered slowly into my headlights as I was speeding home. I slammed the brakes, and we jerked to a halt just three feet from the huge beast, who didn't break his stride, kept his slow shuffle across the road not



realizing what almost happened to him. Very pretty animals, but not terribly smart. On our last morning, Margaret and I climbed a trackless dune with beautiful solitude. The sand was so loose that it avalanched as we scrambled up on all fours... The reward was a sublime sunrise view on a sharp, knife-edge summit ridge with serpentine dunes twisting below us. (More [Sossusvlei photos](#))



**Skeleton Coast:** Now it's foggy and cold, a bizarre change from the scorching interior. Swakopmund is a surreal tourist town with German architecture dropped into the seaside climate of Monterey CA. We discover bird-infested shipwrecks north of town and take a fantastic tour to Sandwich Bay to see flamingos and dozens of species of seabirds. A jackal passes nearby, trotting along the beach, looking like it is up to mischief. We also note an eerie salt mining operation, where sea water is pumped into huge lagoons that are later plied by



giant machines which seem most appropriate for the set of a Star Wars movie. (More [Skeleton Coast photos](#))



**Kolmanskop:** The distances are so large that we've arranged for a charter flight down the coast to the remote fishing town of Luderitz. We see nothing but dunes during the nearly two hour flight. Walking around the pastel houses surrounding Luderitz' bleak and rocky harbor is interesting, but the real draw for me is early-morning photography at a nearby "ghost town" called Kolmanskop. Founded in 1908 with the discovery of diamonds, the town was built in a beautiful German style with lush amenities including a ballroom, hospital, bowling alley, theatre, and casino. Abandoned in 1956 as residents rushed to more plentiful diamond fields, the richly wallpapered houses are being reclaimed by the sand dunes, making an incredibly surreal landscape that I've dreamed of visiting for years. Getting up before sunrise, Eric



and I spend several hours alone, taking pictures, before being joined by Margaret and Darla for a more formal tour. Absolutely incredible! (More [Kolmanskop photos](#))

**Spitzkoppe:** Another few days camping, this time in a region where huge granite peaks jut from the desert plains. Surprisingly, it rains during the night, producing long streaks of water streaming down the burnished orange spires. Margaret and I hire a guide, as required to hike in the area, and it's a delight: scrambling around giant boulders colored like burnt meringue, climbing around bizarre succulent 'bottle trees,' and pulling up chains to surmount cliffs. At the top: incredible views! Walking back to our campsite, we see a curious sight: two birds perched on our car's passenger-side mirror, frantically trying to intimidate their reflections. Taking turns, they each hovered, fluttering and pecking at the mirror, squawking with fury. (More [Spitzkoppe photos](#))



**Etosha National Park:** The final part of our trip is a classic wildlife safari, and at Etosha, Namibia's capstone park, we are able to drive ourselves. The landscape is bizarre – a giant salt pan, 70 miles long – and the sparse vegetation makes it easy to see the animals. We stay at Okaukuejo Camp, a cluster of once-glamorous concrete buildings clustered around an amazing waterhole. On the surface this appears to be a stagnant pond, barely 70' in diameter, but it attracts an incredible range of wildlife and is illuminated by flood lights all night long. Arriving at dusk, we watch a lone giraffe circle the hole, gathering the nerve to go in for a sip. After more than an hour of edging closer, then retreating, the beast sidles up to the pool, splays its gangly legs wide, and stretches its neck down awkwardly to drink. Coming up after each gulp, it sprays water in a huge fountain.

After dark, three rhinoceroses lumber up in sequence. Slow and deliberate, I watch one awkwardly scratch its neck on a rock after drinking; it grunts a low noise of pleasure, reminding me of [my dog] Ellie's pleasure when I comb her neck... The next night is even better with six rhinos converging at some seemingly prearranged time. Two

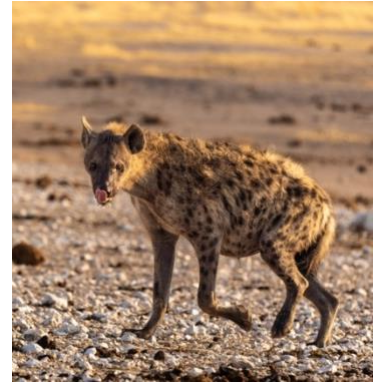




apparent bro-friends spar in the pool, alternately thrusting with their horns and pushing with savage might; then one tenderly kisses the other with his odd, prehensile, upper lip. It felt like David Attenborough should be narrating... But then gets even better as a 'baby' rhino, fully 2/3 the size of mom, rolls underneath her mother to nurse!

The next day, as Darla is feeling better from her terrible vertigo, we head out for a game drive. Two miles from camp we spot three huge elephants striding deliberately towards us. Amazed, we pull over gawking, but

eventually we realize that they are heading back to our waterhole, and we boomerang back home in time to see them arrive. Springbok and wildebeest drift away, allowing the giants to enjoy the pool in peace, drinking then stomping in the mud and finally spraying themselves with water. We snap picture after picture – but not just of the elephants, because their departure cues a symphonic procession of other animals, each group arriving sequentially, seemingly on cue: a herd of springbok, then a cluster of kudu, a flight of zebra, and finally a group of wildebeest – with a pair of African eagles watching over all from the solitary tree.



For our last day, we move just outside the park to the luxurious Ongava lodge on a private reserve, where we are greeted at the car with iced towels scented with vanilla. The lodge is stunning with thatched roof and rustic beams affording an incredible hilltop view across a waterhole to the distant foothills of the Ondundozonanandana range. A cool breeze, shady seating in comfy Victorian chairs, and incredibly attentive service make me wish for a longer visit. After a delicious dinner, we are escorted to our cabin, 100 yards distant, by a rifle-armed guard. Our final game drive includes close-up views of a



lion family, with two adult females and four male cubs of different ages. Lazing in the shade, they seem unbothered by our incredible proximity (just 20'). We spend a long time watching and it's a fitting highlight on which to end the trip. Everyone has been so friendly in Namibia; it's really been a delight!

(More [Etosha photos](#))