

Go2Namibia Shuttle – Route 1: WINDHOEK to KALAHARI ANIB LODGE/KALAHARI ANIB LODGE TO WINDHOEK:

The Kalahari Experience

Departure Whk 8am; departure Anib 2pm.

This 3½-hour (280km) journey takes you southwards from the capital city to the Kalahari Desert and to the stylish Kalahari Anib Lodge, surrounded by burnt-sienna sand. The Kalahari is characterised by burnished dune hills dotted with butter-coloured grass and dark-green camelthorn trees - which often support sprawling sociable weaver nests - accentuated against red sand and a deep blue sky. The magnificent landscape is home to the handsome desert-adapted oryx, ostrich, springbok, black-backed jackal, bat-eared fox and the kori bustard, the largest flying bird. Highlights of a Kalahari stay include the afternoon drive into the desert when the sinking sun sets the sand aglow in fiery colour.

The ideal stop on this route to experience the Kalahari is Kalahari Anib Lodge, imbued with Kalahari character, and on its afternoon nature drive into the Kalahari Anib Park ([link for Kalahari Anib & map](#)).

The shuttle departs at the Weinberg Windhoek Hotel and travels southwards through the meandering Auas Mountains to Rehoboth.

Mountains, heroes & history . . .

Windhoek is nestled in the arms of several mountains: the Auas Mountains to the south, the Eros Mountains to the east and the Khomas-Hochland in the west, so it's no wonder that the airport had to be built 40km to the west of the city on level terrain. In the late 1890s and early 1900s the German Schutztruppe appreciated the higher elevation as a mosquito- and midge-free area, where their horses were safe from horse sickness.

Windhoek was initially called */Ai/Gams* (in Nama) or *Otjomuise* (Otjiherero), referring to the hot spring that once existed in the settlement. We have Jonker Afrikaner, a renowned nineteenth century Oorlam leader, to thank for his road-building skills in the Auas Mountains as well as on the 'Baaiweg' from Windhoek to Walvis Bay. He constructed ox-wagon tracks to establish trade routes with the Cape.

When travelling southwards in days gone by, ox-wagons had to outspan and rest on either side of the Auas range after taking a full day to negotiate the challenging mountain track. They would leave from the Ausspannplatz in Windhoek (the traffic circle has kept its name to this day) to travel through the Auas Mountains, overnighing on the southern side in Rehoboth, then Tsumis and Kalkrand. The trip that today takes us three hours, took them five days and four nights.

On the outskirts of the city 'Heroes' Acre', a war memorial built to honour Namibia's freedom fighters, is an unmistakable landmark with its towering marble obelisk that comes into view soon after the police checkpoint. It was built after Namibia gained its independence in 1990 to honour all those who lost their lives fighting for freedom. A bronze statue on the site, known as the Unknown Soldier, bears striking resemblance to Namibia's Founding Father and first president, Dr Sam Nujoma.

The road from Windhoek meanders through the mountains, passing through the 'Window Bridge', which perfectly frames the landscape, into the valley below. The hills are tawny-coloured in the dry mid-year months and vivid green after summer rainfall.

A tree-filled expanse lines the road as you enter the town of Rehoboth. The town, 87km from Windhoek, is predominantly Baster, a proud group of people originating from the Cape of Good Hope, descendants of Dutch colonists and indigenous Khoisan women. They moved north, crossing the Orange/Gariep River and settling in Rehoboth in 1871.

The Tropic of Capricorn, karosses & fences that circle the world

Just south of Rehoboth, keep eyes peeled for the signs indicating that you are passing through the Tropic of Capricorn. This refers to the line of latitude at 23° south of the equator, which marks the southernmost latitude that experiences the sun directly overhead at noon in midsummer. From here southwards the sun appears at less than a 90° angle.

As you travel into southern Namibia, the land becomes flatter and drier, corresponding with the decrease in rainfall, and sheep farms replace the cattle farms of the more fertile areas further north. Evergreen shepherd trees, important fodder plants for farmers, now dot the landscape. You may notice the many kilometres of farm fences along the way. Their accumulated length is said to be able to circle the globe several times! The nature of fences has changed over the years, many having been made 'jackal-proof' (by the addition of wire netting added to the bottom) in the farmers' war against jackal. In some areas game farms are noticeable with their high fences. Game farming became more popular in the 1960s when the government reviewed old legislation, changing ownership of game from state to the land-owner or the communities. With the legislation people's perception of game changed from seeing wildlife as competing with their livestock for grazing to being profitable assets.

Look out for donkey carts racing along on the side of the road. They are the means of travel in the rural areas and are visible throughout the countryside.

As you near Duineveld, karosses hang on the fences, waving in the breeze. Karosses were traditionally cloaks made from animal hides. Warm and resilient, they were extensively used by the Khoisan people. They are now made into mats, throws and cushions, with various panels of springbok (and even karakul) hide sewn together in decorative patterns. Several Baster traders purchase hides from the tannery in Duineveld and creatively stitch pieces together, demonstrating their fine needlework skills.

Kalkrand is one of the small settlements, like Helmeringhausen, Bethanie and Klein Karas, that were bustling centres at the height of the karakul industry in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, when there was a lucrative market for the lambs' black pelts. They towns usually had a railway siding, hotel, post office and police station and supplied the farmers in the area with everything they needed, as well as a place to sell their pelts. Kalkrand was a hub in the area in those days, with a hardware shop, tennis club, trading store, police station and post office. The towns were lifelines for farmers for communication and

to sell produce or buy material, and farmers often trekked with their animals to these small towns to load them onto the trains for market. As roads and vehicles improved, farmers began to do their shopping in the larger towns and the small settlements struggled to survive. The karakul market crashed in the 1980s, due to overproduction, the change in fashion trends, a series of droughts and an increase in anti-fur activity by animal rights movements. Today, Kalkrand has lost its former glory and is a dusty and neglected settlement on the main road to Windhoek.

Hello Kalahari, here we come!

As you travel southwards, you will begin to spot red Kalahari sand peeping through the vegetation on the hills. The Kalahari is a 900 000km² semi-arid savanna that extends into Botswana and South Africa. It is referred to as a fossil desert, rather than a true desert as it receives more than 100mm of rain per year. This means that it supports a greater variety of flora and fauna. The subterranean water reserves are responsible for the vegetation, including the distinctive camelthorn trees visible along the dune edges and the river courses.

After Kalkrand, and ten kilometres before reaching Mariental, you reach the turnoff onto the C20 towards Stampriet. Thirty kilometres along the C20, a 2km sandy access road on the left-hand side leads through the Kalahari savanna to Kalahari Anib Lodge.

Enjoy lunch on the deck of the spacious, high-roofed restaurant, follow a walking trail, sip on a cold drink at the bar and laze around the pool. In the afternoon join the afternoon nature drive into the Kalahari Anib Park for a taste of the Kalahari and to toast life from the sand dunes as the sun slinks into the horizon, setting the landscape ablaze in golden hues. As the evening approaches, the vehicle heads back towards the lodge where a delicious buffet awaits and then sound and peaceful sleep, watched over by a star-studded night sky.