

Complete Namibia Tour May 2023 Part 1

July 3, 2023

Well, I'm back from my second Complete Namibia Tour for 2023. I have been back for almost a month now, and you're probably wondering where I've been, so I'll quickly update you on what I've been up to before we look at some images from my second trip.



First of all, and the main reason that I was not able to release a single episode after returning in June, is that my accountant waited until two weeks before I was due to submit my accounts to the government tax office to raise a problem, that I needed to know about much earlier. Because I'm now inputting my accounts directly to a system that I am paying for, the responsibility was on me to check everything and find out what I'd done wrong, and this essentially took away all of the time I'd put aside to create my June podcast episodes. I am delighted to tell you that despite Martin Bailey Photography K.K. having two consecutive years with gross sales down 97% over the pre-COVID years, my 13th year in business was my best year to date, so I feel better about that.

I have to admit that I also spent more time than I'd expected to learn about 3D printing. I had an idea for several products that I wanted to create, and either prototype or actually produce with a 3D printer, so I bought one shortly after returning home and was honestly not expecting the learning curve to be so steep. I got printing pretty quickly but then found that printing anything of any size was going to take too long, so I added a device that would take control of the printer and get my prints out between two and five times faster than if I used the printer as it arrived from the manufacturer. Setting up and tuning the printer via the new device took another few days, again eating into my schedule.

Although this hasn't taken much of my time, there were a few hours here and there required to pick up, and enjoy a few drives in a new car. I probably never mentioned this, but four years ago, having not used my Toyota SUV as much as I used to, I downsized to a Prius, but as good as it was, I never really fell in love with that car. Then, towards the end of last year, Toyota announced the fifth generation Prius, and it took just one look to realize that they had done something exceptional with this update.

The global transistor shortage pumped up the used car prices, so I got a fantastic deal on my four-year-old Prius, so rather than pumping more money into paying off the loan for my old car, I decided to wipe the slate clean and start again with a car that I could fall in love with. If you haven't seen the new Prius yet, it's now almost a sports car while maintaining the Prius fuel economy that most people buy them for. The rounded back wheel arches and a windshield that is the same angle as a Lamborghini and all of the other sporty changes make it a very nice vehicle.

Finally, over the last week, I've spent some time having my eyes checked, as my eyesight in my left eye has deteriorated rapidly over the last six months, and it turns out that I have developed a cataract that is affecting my eyesight in my left eye. Seven months ago, as I started worrying, I was told about the cataract but also that it was not severe enough to affect my eyesight, and then it was only the left eye. I have a similar one in my right eye now, so I will have surgery to fix my left eye first. Then,

probably next year, I'll need to do the right eye as well. I have to tell you, I'm more worried about someone operating on my eyes than I was when I had to have them poke around in my brain to try to remove my brain tumor twelve years ago.

Anyway, after all that, I'm back at my computer creating a new episode and will continue after this to update you on some other stuff as well. We'll start today with what I'm hoping to make a two-part series to update you on my second Namibia tour. I came home from this trip with 222 images in my final selection, compared to 275 from the first trip, but that isn't to say that there were fewer opportunities. We had as many if not more opportunities, but because we visit all of the same locations, I will try to show you only stuff that we either didn't

see or is simply above and beyond what we had on the first trip.

Fisheye Quiver Tree Sunset

As usual, we visited the Quiver Tree Forest and did our sunset and astrophotography shoots. The only thing I did differently, which I thought was fun, is using my TtArtisan 11mm Fisheye lens that I talked about in episode 811 to shoot this sunset image. The curved horizon may not be to everyone's taste, but I think it's fun, and it enabled me to position some trees in just the right place, which I could not do with my 15-35mm Canon RF lens. I've also continued to be very happy with the image quality of this inexpensive fisheye.



Walls Come Down

We visited the Giant's Playground the following morning, with very similar results to the first trip, and then traveled on to Luderitz, from where we'd visit Kolmanskop and Elizabeth Bay, the deserted diamond mine towns. I focussed a little more on getting low and showing the collapsed walls as the salt-filled Atlantic air batters the remains of the coastal town, bringing down more and more of the buildings each year. Again, I mostly see Elizabeth Bay in black and white, as the brown tones that paint everything there seem very drab.





Perpendicular Slit Highlights

We did all the usual shots in Kolmanskop too. One that I like, as I don't recall seeing this before, is from one of my favorite rooms with the indoor dune. We got to this room on our second day in the deserted diamond mine town just as the sun was overhead, so the highlights on the walls from the sunlight shining through the roof's slats were almost all perpendicular.

Spotted Eagle Owl

As we drove towards the Naukluft National Park two days later, our driver and guide found this Spotted Eagle Owl sitting at the side of the road. I've seen these beautiful birds at night, by a spotlight, but that didn't make for much of a photo, so this opportunity was a bit of a treat, enabling us to see those beautiful big yellow eyes. At first, we all thought this owl was sitting on a small rodent it had caught, but on closer inspection, the white area below its abdomen is simply one of its legs.

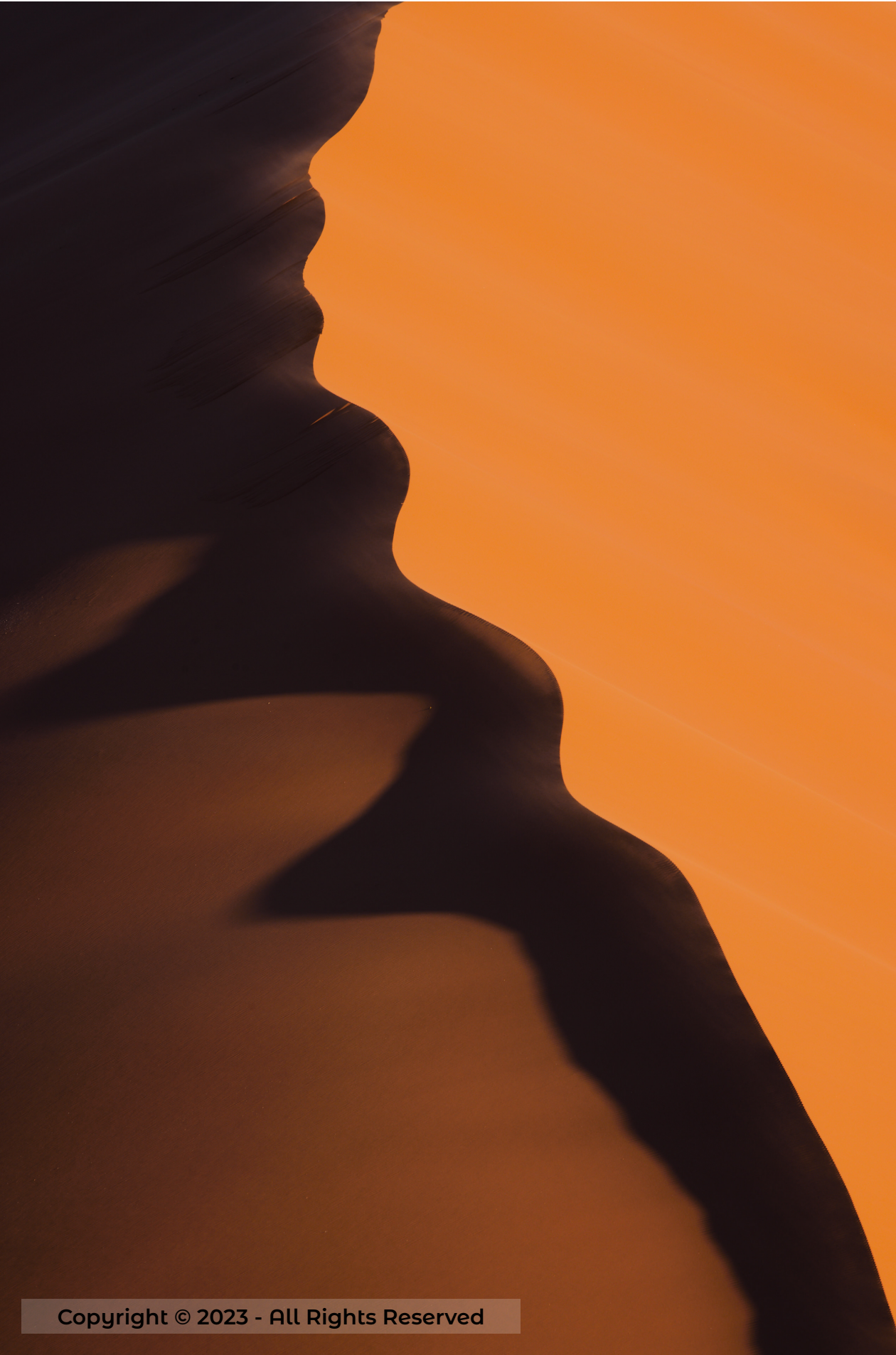


Bat-Eared Fox Leaves Den

I have photographed the Bat-Eared Fox several times in Namibia, but they have always been boring. On this trip, we found a slightly less shy group than usual and stayed with them long enough to get this shot, as one of them left the group sitting by what I believe is probably the opening to their den.

Shadow at Sunset

We did our usual Deadvlei shots with the silhouetted Camel-Thorn Trees, but even though I shot some great compositions, they aren't any different from previous visits, so we'll skip that too. I did enjoy this shot of just a tiny section of Dune number 40 as the sun approached the horizon, causing this striking shadow.



Ruffled Feathers

I still didn't get a perfect heart shape created by two flamingo heads at sunset, but I did kind of like the ruffled feathers on this flamingo as the group settled in for the night at Walvis Bay. I love trying to get this shot each time we visit, and I always like some of the resulting photos, but it is challenging to get just the right image, as a significant part of it is just the luck of the draw, depending on which group you pick.

We traveled further North, and although we'd heard that the Himba people had returned to their settlement after the first tour, when we arrived, we found that they had moved away again. On the first visit, I'd been concerned that they had perhaps been driven out to make way for the Himba village tourist trap they had created down the road. Still, on this visit, it was easy to see that despite the valley looking very green, there was no grass on the ground for their goats to feed on, so the decision to move again made more sense this time.

I was determined not to revisit the tourist trap, and as we drove past it, we could see that there was no one there anyway, which was quietly comforting. We asked around and were given directions from a young man who used both hands to point and show left, right, and over-mountain instructions. Apparently, for the Herero people, it's rude to point with a single finger, even if you are pointing out directions. We followed his advice, and although we had to ask people a few more times, were eventually able to find a very





remote Himba settlement that our guide negotiated for us to photograph. Here is my favorite photograph from the visit, as usual, shot inside a hut, just with light from the doorway, and then I've darkened down the background with a few layers in Capture One Pro.

I was also delighted and saddened to hear that Makihoro, the young Himba girl I've been photographing since she was a child, has now got a child of her own. You may recall from the travelogues from previous year's trips that I had hoped to photograph her with her child to round out a project documenting her transformation from a child to a mother, but it wasn't to be. The settlement has moved too far, and we had too little information to spend time looking for her. Maybe next year, though. You never know.

Running Hartebeest

OK, we're doing pretty well with my tactic, only to show work different from previous trips. After the first eight images, we are about to move on to our final days of the tour as we start to shoot wildlife in the Etosha National Park or the lodges we stay at adjacent to the park. This image shows four Hartebeest as they tore across the plane on our first afternoon in the park.

We had another wonderful experience getting out of our safari vehicle and walking, this time, to within just 5 meters of two White Rhinos. This was at the reserve at our lodge, of course. You are not allowed to leave the vehicle in the Etosha National Park. The photos were similar to the ones I shared in the tour one travelogue so I won't share an image again.



Four Elephants Drinking

Here is an elephant shot that felt quite good to capture, with these four elephants all in a line at the Okaukuejo water hole. These are magnificent animals, and the more time I spent with them, the more time I wanted to spend with them. We had some beautiful encounters with elephants during this trip, and I'll share a few more photos of them next week as we conclude this short series.

We'll wrap it up there for this week. We have filled the first vehicle for 2024, and there is no more time to try and fill a second vehicle, so if you wanted to travel with me to Namibia, you're a tad too late. I am taking a break after 2024 for at least a year. If you would like to travel with me to Namibia after that, please get in touch with me, and I'll see what I can arrange.





MARTIN BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY K.K.

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