

# Namibia Tour Report 2024 Part 1



Aug 2, 2024



Shortly after I moved house this spring, I headed out to Namibia to run my 2024 Complete Namibia Tour, and today, I'd like to spend a little time to walk you through our trip. I was looking forward to meeting my guests, as I always do, but on this trip, I'd be meeting three guests I'd previously traveled with, which is always fun. Four of them had arrived a couple of days early to acclimatize, and we noticed them walking up the track back to our first lodge, so I hopped out of the vehicle, transferring me from the airport to say hello and hug some old friends.



As usual, we started with a briefing with our trusty driver and guide, and as usual, the guests in the group fell instantly in love with him. He's not only good-looking but a perfect gentleman at all times. He also carries a large dose of good humor, which always helps to keep the group happy.

The following morning, we started our drive to Keetmanshoop, where we spend one night to get access to the Quiver Tree Forest and the Giants Playground, both of which are excellent places to shoot. The sunset shots from the Quiver Tree Forest, though, have become increasingly difficult over the years due to the bushes growing around the base of most of the trees, and I find these quite distracting.

### Quiver Tree Milky Way

I do still enjoy our visit back into the forest after dinner, for some astrophotography, as you can see in this first image for today. Keep in mind that if you are listening with an application that displays chapter images, you'll be able to follow along right there, but otherwise, visit the blog to follow along. I recall thinking that the bright disk in the

bottom right of the photograph was the Andromeda galaxy last year, but, of course, it's way too big to be a distant galaxy. I now know it's a patch of Magellanic cloud, like that which makes up the bulk of the Milky Way.

### Quiver Tree Sunrise

The following morning, we were up early to visit the Giant's Playground for sunrise and took our usual shots of the warm pre-sunrise

sky. We'd gotten back to our vehicle for coffee when we started to see these corpuscular rays forming, so everyone scuttled back to a nice spot to get a few more photos before breakfast. See following page.











## Indoor Sand Dune

After breakfast, we drove to the coastal town of Luderitz, from where we visited the deserted diamond mind towns of Kolmanskop and Elizabeth Bay. Elizabeth Bay is still just about worth a visit, but the buildings there are rapidly succumbing to the sea winds. Kolmanskop is still very appealing, with scenes such as this indoor dune, with light shining through the gaps between the ceiling slats due to the roof of the building falling through.





## Oryx at Full Pelt

After two nights at Luderitz, we drove through the desert to Sossusvlei, in the Naukluft National Park, where we'd spend a further three nights. On the way, we were able to photograph an Oryx running at full pelt along an agricultural wire fence. I liked the dynamism of the shot, so I spent ten minutes or so to clone out the fence.



## Milky Way Full Arch

In the national park, we stayed at a different lodge than on most of my previous visits. This enabled us to walk a little distance from our permanent tents. From there, I shot seven vertical frames to stitch together, making this full-arch Milky Way photo. There's a bit of light pollution and other distractions, but I was happy to get this.





## Deadvlei Camel-thorn Trees

We visited Deadvlei the morning after we arrived, and I shot this image during that visit. It's the same thing I always shoot, but I've added it to complete the story. What we see here, of course, is the foreground clay pan and camel-thorn trees in the shadow of Big Daddy, the largest dune in the park. The sun hits the side of the dune behind the trees, with the shadow from Big Daddy running perfectly along the edge of the clay pan, giving us the contrast that makes this shot what it is.





## Sand Dune (Stitched)

In the evenings, we visited the dunes and shot them as the sun reached the horizon, giving us excellent dark and light sides, and the warmth of the sunset made the dunes even redder than usual. Because I had opted to take my 200-800mm RF mount lens on this trip, for these dune shots, I mostly had to turn the camera into vertical or portrait orientation and shoot several frames to stitch together because 200mm was too long a focal length to get these shots from the optimal perspective points.

On our second morning in the park, we arranged a balloon ride for all of the guests, and although I've always said I'd go to Deadvlei even if none of the guests wanted to go back, I didn't have a vehicle, as our guests were using it, so I stayed in bed for a half and hour or so longer, and still got up silly early, and started to work on images etc.



## Flamingo Touch-Down

Our next stop was Walvis Bay, which is kind of like a break from the busy schedule, but the flamingoes in the sea just across from the hotel always draw us back out of the comfort of the hotel. One of my favorite shots from the trip is a flamingo touching down in the shallow water, barely covering the mud flats.

As I mentioned in Episode 836, my review of the new Canon RF 200-800mm lens, the 200-800mm is more challenging to get initial focus than the 100-500mm lens. I recall losing several opportunities for similar images because I couldn't focus in time to capture the landing, so I was happy to get this and a few similar shots. I was zoomed past the 500mm mark for this shot, so I capitalized on the additional focal length available.





# Himba Couple in Hut

Last year, the Himba settlement that I'd been visiting for many years had moved on, so I was concerned that we might be unable to find another settlement that would be happy for us to spend some time with them. My concerns didn't pan out, though, as our guide was persistent and thorough, as usual, and was able to find a distant settlement. Although we arrived completely unannounced, they welcomed us in and gave us an unbelievable experience.



When we arrived, the man you see in this shot sat at the holy fire and prayed, announcing to his ancestors that they had visitors from afar and requesting our safekeeping as we continued to travel. As you can see, they were happy to sit for us, although we respected their time, so each person only spends a few minutes with them in their hut.





## Himba Farewell

We played with their children, and I have some videos of them with their faces full of joy. When we left, they danced for us for over 20 minutes. They'd finish a dance, and we'd say

thank you, thinking that we should leave, and they'd start another dance. It didn't feel as though we overstayed our welcome, and they genuinely seemed to enjoy our visit to a degree. We certainly enjoyed it, and I thank them again now from Japan, my far-off land.

I still have over a hundred images from the remainder of this tour as we ventured into Etosha National Park, so we'll finish there for this week, and I'll select ten shots for the next episode and get that into the feed soon.



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