Namibia, Botswana & Zimbabwe

Namibia, Okavango & Victoria Falls Overland



Rosy-faced Lovebirds by Greg de Klerk

From the lily-choked backwaters of the Okavango Panhandle, the flamingo-studded lagoons of Walvis Bay to the game-filled waterholes of Etosha and the breath-taking Victoria Falls, this tour provides incredible contrasts and an eco-tourism experience like no other!

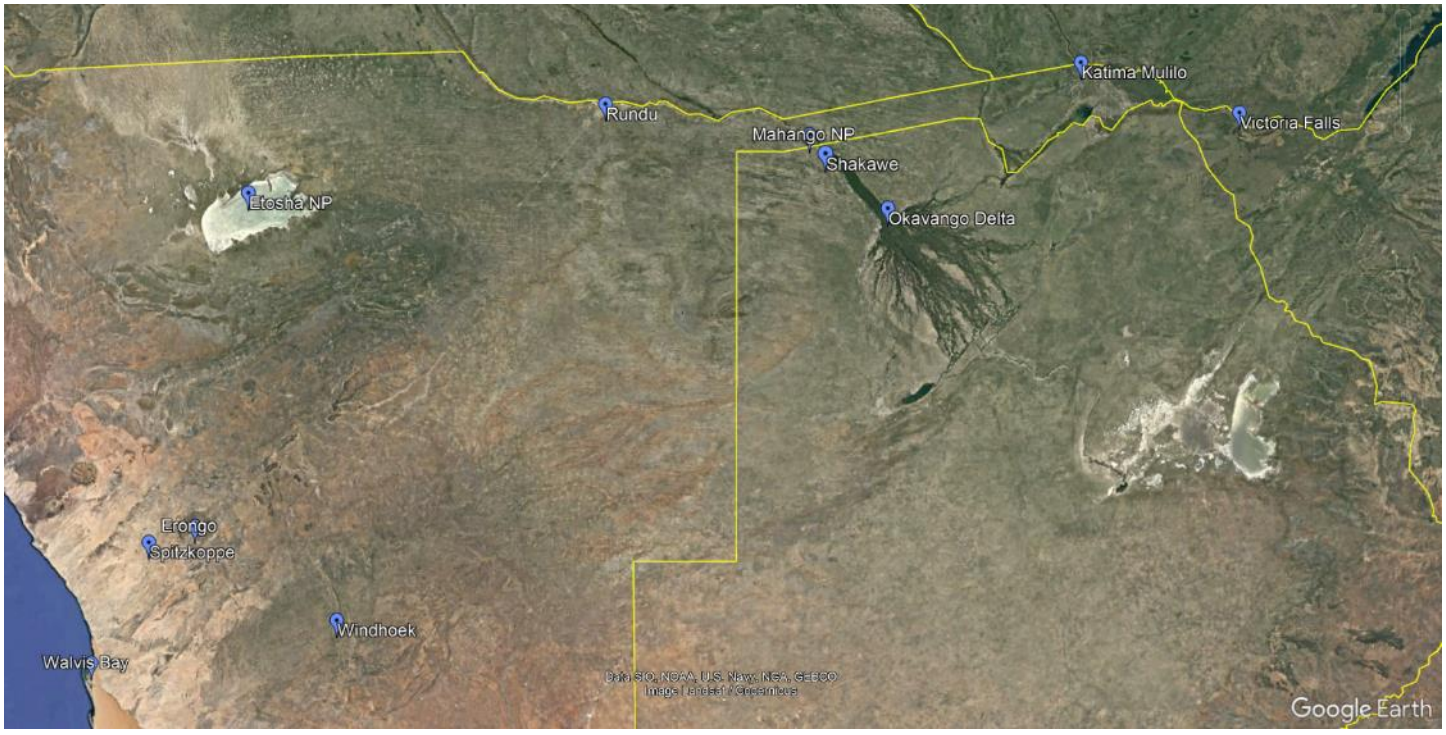
This very popular overland safari is a birding and wildlife extravaganza, visiting some of the major highlights of three of Africa's most remarkable countries, all offering vast areas of pristine wilderness. Birdlife abounds and we search for an impressive array of localized, as well as more widespread African species such as the sought-after Slaty Egret, Wattled Crane, Ludwig's Bustard, Rüppell's Korhaan, Secretarybird, Pel's Fishing Owl (one of ten possible owls!), Hartlaub's Spurfowl, the huge Coppery-tailed Coucal, Rüppell's Parrot, Monteiro's Hornbill, Rockrunner, Violet Wood Hoopoe, Bare-cheeked and Black-faced Babblers, Rosy-faced Lovebird, White-tailed Shrike, Herero Chat, Dune and Gray's Larks, Violet-eared Waxbill – and so much more besides!

What's more, we have time to observe mammals, large and small, ranging from elephant shrews to Africa Elephant, Fur Seals to Hippopotamus, as well as exciting range of charismatic African big game including the fabled 'Big 5'.

The spectacular and dramatic scenery, coupled with quality mammal viewing and exceptional birding, all combine to make this one of our most popular birding adventures!

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**
Day 2	**Victoria Falls to Katima Mulilo (Namibia)**
Day 3	**Katima Mulilo area**
Day 4	**Katima Mulilo to Mahango via Bwabwata National Park**
Day 5	**Mahango Game Reserve to Okavango Panhandle (Botswana)**
Day 6	**Shakawe area**
Day 7	**Shakawe to Rundu (Namibia)**
Day 8	**Rundu to Eastern Etosha, Etosha National Park**
Day 9	**Eastern Etosha**
Day 10	**Eastern Etosha to Halali**
Day 11	**Halali to Okaukuejo area**
Day 12	**Okaukuejo area**
Day 13	**Okaukuejo area to Erongo Mountains**
Day 14	**Erongo Mountains & Spitzkoppe areas**
Day 15	**Erongo Mountains to Walvis Bay**
Day 16	**Walvis Bay area**
Day 17	**Final departure**



Birding sites in detail

Victoria Falls. These falls have rightly been considered one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World and we will spend some time appreciating the immense spectacle of the Zambezi River plunging 300ft into the gorge below. The spray from the falls has created a verdant rainforest and we will undoubtedly find some interesting birds here that may include Trumpeter and Crowned Hornbills, Bearded Scrub Robin, Yellow-breasted Apalis, various sunbirds including Amethyst, Collared and Purple-banded, as well as Black-backed Puffback, Tropical Boubou and Red-winged Starling.



Slaty Egret by Glen Valentine

Chobe National Park & Zambezi National Park. Our drive through these mega parks is liable to turn up an array of mammals including Giraffe, Plains Zebra, Impala, Greater Kudu, Hippopotamus, herds of muscular African Buffalo and the iconic African Elephant. On the birding front, we shall keep an eye open for Racket-tailed Roller, Bradfield's Hornbill, Southern Pied Babbler and both Long-tailed and Broad-tailed Paradise Whydahs, African Harrier-Hawk, African Cuckoo-Hawk and even the elusive Dickinson's Kestrel.

Katima Mulilo area. Seasonally flooded wetlands in the area may yield the likes of the desirable Lesser Jacana, Rosy-throated Longclaw, African Pygmy Goose, Rufous-bellied Heron, Slaty Egret, Greater Painted-snipe and flocks of African Openbill, while the extensive grasslands host Rufous-naped Lark and Black-bellied Bustard. Sandbars on the river are the favoured haunt of White-crowned Lapwing. Two other special targets in the area



Victoria Falls by Glen Valentine

are the rare Shelley's and Copper Sunbirds, and we will work hard for sightings of both these tricky species. River woodland holds the beautiful Schalow's Turaco, Mourning Collared Dove and White-browed Robin-Chat.

As the day draws to a close we may even be fortunate enough to spot the rare Bat Hawk as it hunts bats near the river, while after nightfall we can search for both Square-tailed and the localised Swamp Nightjar.

Bwabwata National Park. This park stretches from the Okavango River east across the Caprivi to the Kwando River, containing endless kilometres of teak woodland. We'll be watching for Dark Chanting Goshawk, uncommon Dickinson's Kestrel and stately Southern Ground Hornbill, which can sometimes be seen in small family groups alongside the road. The narrow floodplain of the Kwando River may produce Saddle-billed Stork and African Pygmy Goose.



Pel's Fishing Owl by Daniel Danckwerts

Mahango Game Reserve. Situated along the Okavango River just north of Botswana, this unique park protects habitats ranging from attractive papyrus swamps to climax teak woodland and is a superb birding locality. We will search the open floodplain here for the localised and uncommon Slaty Egret, African Spoonbill, Long-toed Lapwing, White-faced Whistling and Knob-billed Ducks and the regal and endangered Wattled Crane. Hirundines are usually in evidence and we will scan for Lesser Striped, Wire-tailed and Grey-rumped Swallows and the large Banded Martin. The adjacent woodland is home to good numbers of birds including Martial Eagle, Dark Chanting Goshawk, Greater Blue-eared Starling and Crested Barbet, whilst open areas support Flappet and Rufous-naped Larks, African and Plain-backed Pipits and Quailfinch. Seasonally flooded grassland may hold Luapula Cisticola and African Snipe.



Violet Wood Hoopoe by Clayton Burne

Despite the presence of large mammals, one is allowed to get out of one's vehicle in designated areas, and it is this freedom that makes birding here so special. We will be careful, however, since Hippopotamus, African Elephant and Nile Crocodile are all common. Elegant Red Lechwe and Southern Reedbuck graze on the floodplain, and if we are very lucky we may also see the shy Chobe sub-species of Bushbuck. Other special mammals occurring here are the spectacular Sable and Roan Antelopes and rare Topi. In addition to the aforementioned three antelope, we should see African Buffalo, African Elephant, Impala, Greater Kudu, Common Warthog and troops of Chacma Baboon. It is this wonderful variety that makes Mahango such a fascinating wildlife adventure!

Caprivi. The broad-leaved woodlands of the area support a fairly specialized avifauna, with many of these birds typical of the superficially similar miombo woodlands of central Africa. White-breasted Cuckooshrike, the richly-coloured Rufous-bellied Tit, Souza's Shrike, Grey Penduline Tit, Green-capped Eremomela,

Racket-tailed Roller, Arnott's Chat, Tinkling Cisticola, Bradfield's Hornbill, Retz's Helmetshrike and Red-headed Weaver are all specials we will keep a lookout for. Bird densities in the teak woodlands are typically quite low, with the trick to locating them hinging on our ability to find mixed species flocks.



Cheetah by Glen Valentine

Shakawe area. Well vegetated river banks and extensive woodland can be found close to our lodging. Rising with the exuberant dawn chorus, we'll be searching for African Barred Owlet, African Wood and the fabulous Pel's Fishing Owl. Crested Francolin, African Green Pigeon, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Green Wood Hoopoe, Striped Kingfisher, Black-collared Barbet, Lesser Honeyguide, Arrow-marked Babbler, Bennett's, Golden-tailed and Bearded Woodpeckers, Orange-breasted Bushshrike, Retz's Helmetshrike, Grey Tit-Flycatcher, Violet-backed and Meves's Starlings, Southern Yellow White-eye, Lesser Masked Weaver, the localized Brown Firefinch, Swamp Boubou, Hartlaub's Babbler, Terrestrial Brownbul and White-browed Robin-Chat are all possible here.

A wide variety of herons, egrets and kingfishers occur along the river, and the extensive papyrus reedbeds adjacent to the lodge are home to Pied, Giant and Malachite Kingfishers, Chirping Cisticola, Greater Swamp Warbler, Holub's Golden and Southern Brown-throated Weavers and Fan-tailed Widowbird. Little, and the elegant White-fronted Bee-eaters breed in the vicinity.

We will also partake in a leisurely boat cruise along the Okavango in search of waterbirds including the shy White-backed Night Heron, Black, Striated and Squacco Herons, the huge Coppery-tailed Coucal, noisy Black Crake and elegant African Skimmer (seasonal). African Fish Eagle is common and African Marsh Harrier is often seen quartering over the reedbeds here. Some of the animals we could encounter include the furtive Spotted-necked Otter, Hippopotamus and good numbers of Nile Crocodile. If we are extremely lucky, we may spot the shy Sitatunga (a swamp-dwelling antelope). After dinner, we may search in the lodge grounds for Fiery-necked Nightjar.



Bare-cheeked Babbler by Adam Riley

Rundu Water Works. We'll pay this site a short visit for Blue-billed Teal, African Swamphen, African Rail, Senegal Coucal, Southern Red Bishop, Thick-billed Weaver and Orange-breasted Waxbill. (Access to this site is not always possible.)

Rundu area. We'll be able to gaze across the Okavango River into Angola, perhaps picking

up Spur-winged Goose, Water Thick-knee, Collared Pratincole, Rufous-bellied Heron or Coppery-tailed Coucal. If river levels are low enough, we may see Rock Pratincole on exposed rocks near Divundu.



Thirsty Lions by Adam Riley

Halali - Etosha National Park. The Halali region is famous amongst birders as a site for Violet Wood Hoopoe and Bare-cheeked Babbler, both denizens of the taller mopane woodland in this central part of the park, though these sought-after birds can prove challenging to find! Other species in this area include the spectacular Bateleur, Shikra, Helmeted Guineafowl, Fawn-coloured Lark, flocks of quizzical White-crested Helmetshrike, Southern White-crowned Shrike and Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow. The camp itself is an excellent location for finding roosting owls and we hope to locate Southern White-faced and African Scops Owls, and possibly even Western Barn Owl.

In the evening, we'll have an opportunity to spend time at a floodlit waterhole. The evening's pageant is likely to commence with hundreds of sandgrouse flying in to drink, with later visitors including nightjars, owls and a plethora of mammalian possibilities. African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros and Greater Kudu are regular, whilst Cape Porcupine, African Wild Cat, Leopard and even the bizarre Aardvark have all been seen drinking here. Honey Badger sometimes makes a nuisance of itself in the camp, rummaging through rubbish bins in search of scraps, and if we are fortunate, we may locate a few of these curious animals.

Namutoni – Etosha National Park. The shallow Fischer's Pan, an eastern extension of the main Etosha Pan, is a notable natural feature of this area and lies to the north of Namutoni. Water levels vary tremendously and the pan is most often completely dry, but if water is present, we may find flamingos, huge Saddle-billed and Yellow-billed Storks, Red-billed Teal, South African Shelduck and large numbers of migratory waders.



Rüppell's Parrot by Greg de Klerk

Further to the north of Namutoni lie extensive grassy plains that are sometimes home to large herds of Gemsbok, Springbok and Common Wildebeest. The unique Secretarybird and elegant Blue Crane are possible here, and we may find Eastern Clapper Lark and the diminutive Desert Cisticola.

Mammals are plentiful in the dense woodland south of camp and include Spotted Hyena, African Elephant, Giraffe, 'Black-faced' Impala and two antelope

largely restricted to this part of the park: the huge Common Eland and the diminutive Damara Dik-dik. Here we will also search for the most elusive of the five babbler species occurring in Namibia, Black-faced Babbler.



White-tailed Shrike by Adam Riley

Okaukuejo - Etosha National Park. The word "Etosha" means "Great White Place" in the local Herero language and nowhere else is the "great whiteness" of the enormous pan more evident than around Okaukuejo. Etosha is one of Africa's premier big game destinations and medium and large mammals teem around the huge pan. Waterholes are dotted around the park, and these will often be the focus of our attention as it is here that streams of thousands of mammals come to drink. On occasion, up to a dozen species of mammal can be seen at once as they mill around the saline water. Commonly encountered species are the regal Gemsbok, Greater Kudu, Springbok, Giraffe, African Elephant, Hartebeest, Common Wildebeest, Plain's Zebra and 'Black-faced' Impala.

These waterholes don't only attract the attention of thirsty grazers and photographers but also predators: Black-backed Jackal, African Wild Cat, prides of lazing Lion, Spotted Hyena and even Cheetah and Leopard are included in the possible suite of carnivores.

We will also be searching the open grasslands and sparse Acacia savanna for birds such as the huge Martial Eagle, the elegant Red-necked Falcon, Greater Kestrel, the magnificent Kori Bustard (the world's heaviest flying bird), Spotted Thick-knee, Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark, Red-capped and Pink-billed Larks, Capped Wheatear, flocks of angry-looking Scaly-feathered Finch, Red-crested Korhaan, Crowned Lapwing, Burchell's Sandgrouse, Namaqua Dove, Burnt-neck Eremomela, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, flocks of Red-billed Quelea (sometimes numbering many thousands) and Blue Waxbill are all possible.



Rüppell's Korhaan by Dan Danckwerts

Vultures are often numerous in this area and may include Lappet-faced, White-headed and wheeling flocks of White-backed. We'll also be on the lookout for Rufous-eared Warbler (this area of the park holding an isolated population).

Okaukuejo area. Birds are abundant in and around our lodge, and we may see Grey Go-away-bird, African Hoopoe, Southern Yellow-billed and Southern Red-billed Hornbills, Cardinal Woodpecker, Wattled and ubiquitous Cape Starlings, Brubru, Marico, White-bellied and Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Green-winged Pytilia and Pygmy Falcon.



Approaching Spitzkoppe by David Hoddinott

Okaukuejo area to Erongo Mountains. We'll makes stops en route for two of Namibia's scarce and sought-after near-endemics - Bare-cheeked Babbler and Rüppell's Parrot. Roadside birding is always rewarding and we will watch out for Verreaux's Eagle, Black-chested Snake Eagle, Pale Chanting Goshawk, Black-winged Kite, the beautiful Purple Roller, the diminutive Long-billed Crombec, Anteating Chat, Marico and Chat Flycatchers, Cape Crow, Pale-winged Starling, Great and Cape Sparrows and Lark-like Bunting. The scenery is dotted with huge, golden Social Weaver nests and we may be fortunate in locating the tiny Pygmy Falcon that utilises these nests as a convenient home.

Erongo Mountains. Today's target species requires a pre-dawn walk to a vantage point near our lodge. En route we may find the rock-loving Freckled Nightjar, but the bird in question is another near-endemic, the bizarre Hartlaub's Spurfowl, which is only likely to be seen at first light when coveys emerge to vocalize atop prominent boulders. Other potential birds at this locality are Rockrunner, Gabar Goshawk, Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird, Damara Red-billed Hornbill, Barred Wren-Warbler, Kalahari Scrub Robin, the wing-flicking Familiar Chat, White-tailed Shrike (particularly approachable individuals reside around the lodge) and Black-faced Waxbill. The strange Dassie Rat (belonging to a monotypic family) may also be seen poking its whiskered nose out from a rock crevice while a variety of interesting reptiles scurry over the rocks.



Hartlaub's Spurfowl by Greg de Klerk

Erongo to Spitzkoppe. Leaving the coastal plains behind us, we will be scanning suitable habitat for Burchell's Courser. Luck and patience are needed to find this species as it is nomadic and unpredictable; however, the beautiful Double-banded Courser and flocks of Spike-heeled Lark should entertain us while we search. Further to the north, we will look for the endemic Rüppell's Parrot, localized Violet Wood Hoopoe and the handsome Southern Pied Babbler.



Welwitschia plant by Andre Bernon

Spitzkoppe. This area has a series of impressive granite inselbergs rising out of the desert plains. It is also a good site for Herero Chat, Namibia's most elusive near-endemic, but we will require luck and patience to find this localized bird. Whilst searching the base of this incredible geological formation, we may also find Augur Buzzard, the attractive Rosy-faced Love bird, the near-endemic Bradfield's Swift, Acacia Pied Barbet, Sabota and Karoo Long-billed Larks, Layard's Warbler, Yellow-bellied Eremomela, Bokmakierie (a near-endemic bushshrike), White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, White-throated Canary and both Cinnamon-breasted and Cape Buntings. White-tailed Shrike, arguably Namibia's most striking near-endemic, should also entertain us here.

The agile Klipspringer and Rock Hyrax may also be seen, whilst brilliantly coloured Namib Rock Agamas are common. Other possible reptiles in this area are the impressive Boulton's Namib Day Gecko, Bibron's Thick-toed Gecko, Bradfield's Dwarf Gecko and Namaqua Sand Lizard. The surrounding gravel plains occasionally produce Ludwig's Bustard, whilst Namaqua Sandgrouse, Stark's Lark and Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark are more regular.

Swakopmund. This quaint seaside village has a decidedly German atmosphere. Freshwater pans at the edge of town are home to typical wetland inhabitants such as Black-necked Grebe, Cape and Red-billed Teals and Cape Shoveler. We will explore the famed Welwitschia Plains to seek out one of the world's most bizarre plants: *Welwitschia mirabilis,* a coniferous plant that, despite its immense age, grows to just a few feet tall and has only two leaves. They survive in the bone-dry gravel plains of the Namib Desert, and we will also look for two species of colourful beetles that only survive around these unique plants. We'll also be on the lookout for the near-endemic and localised Gray's Lark. This diminutive and inconspicuous bird forages in small groups over the most inhospitable of terrains, a seemingly incredulous habitat for any life form!



Dune Lark by Daniel Danckwerts

Walvis Bay. The surrounds of Walvis (Whale) Bay are surprisingly birdy. We'll spend our time in the dune fields to the south of town as they are home to Namibia's only true endemic – the handsome Dune Lark. Like many of the desert larks, its plumage colouration perfectly matches that of its environment: the deep ochre sands of the Namib dunes. Other birds that we may encounter whilst searching for this bird are Chestnut-vented Warbler, Black-chested Prinia, Dusky Sunbird, Orange River White-eye and Common Waxbill.



Rockrunner by Greg de Klerk

The marine coast, offshore guano islands, saltpans and estuaries around Walvis Bay and Swakopmund typically teem with water birds, whilst the large numbers of Greater and Lesser Flamingos that feed along the fringes of the bay area are more than sufficient to make the trip worthwhile!

Marine cormorants, especially Cape, form impressive lines as they stream out over the cold ocean in search of food. We will scan these large flocks in search of Crowned and Bank Cormorant, which occur in much lower numbers. Great White Pelican is prominent throughout the area and specialities of the pans include the localised Chestnut-banded Plover, Hartlaub's Gull and Damara Tern, the latter being a breeding endemic to southern Africa. The striking African Oystercatcher may be seen along the rocky shores.

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease	■ ■ ■	Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities. Can be tiring due to long drives, climatic conditions.
Birding Ease	■ ■ ■	Undemanding. Most key species offer good visuals in open conditions. Birding is from roadside, forest edge & open habitats.
Accommodation	■ ■ ■	Comfortable.
Walking / Trails	■ ■ ■	Moderate walking, mostly on flat ground, roads, wide trails and around lodge gardens.
Vehicles / Roads	■ ■ ■	Spacious bus or converted safari vehicle (group size dependent). Travel is on both sealed and unsealed roads with limited traffic. Several long drives. Some drives on bumpy, dusty, dirt roads.
Photography	■ ■ ■	Good to excellent.
Annoyances	■ ■ ■	Long drives. Some locations can be dusty. Slow service provision at some locations.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 17;
- Drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels) not noted above;
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- Much of our time is spent in vehicles as we need to cover long distances to get to the best areas for birds and animals. For the comfort of your fellow travellers and yourself, please do not over-pack. Stick to 20kg (44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage. Depending on group sizes, we make use of two different styles of vehicles.
    - A spacious 22-seater bus for larger groups. The large windows and elevated vehicle height allow for improved visuals and photography.
    - Specially converted 7-seater Toyota Landcruiser. These vehicles have more limited space.
- During the tour, we visit several national parks and game reserves which contain potentially dangerous animals and therefore you are confined to the vehicle and are, quite understandably, not allowed to exit.
- Temperatures in Namibia are variable.

  - Autumn/Winter (May to August) - can be warm during the day (reaching as much as 31°C / 88°F in the Caprivi). At night and in the early mornings it can, however, be very cold (as low as 5°C / 41°F in the central highlands of Namibia).
  - Spring/Summer (September to April) - can be very high at this time of year, (reaching as much as 40°C / 104°F in the Caprivi).
- Due to the quality of service and accommodation within Etosha National Park, we limit our overnight stays in the park, rather using private lodges on the outskirts of the park where possible.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour begins with a group dinner on the evening of day 1 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The tour will conclude after breakfast on day 17 in Walvis Bay, Namibia.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Victoria Falls Airport, Zimbabwe (IATA: VFA) and Walvis Bay International Airport, Namibia (IATA: WVB), are the main ports of entry and exit for international flights for this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.