

Namibia

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Purple Fig Bistro (p258)
- ➔ Raft (p285)
- ➔ Anchor @ The Jetty (p285)
- ➔ Sam's Giardino Hotel (p281)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Serra Cafema Camp (p275)
- ➔ Sossusvlei Desert Lodge (p292)
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- ➔ Erongo Wilderness Lodge (p254)

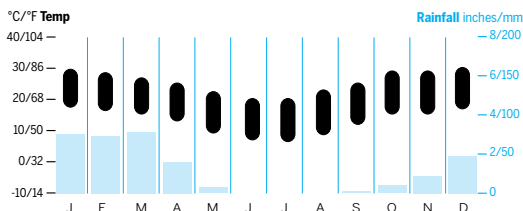
Why Go?

Namibia possesses some of the most stunning landscapes in Africa, and a trip through the country is one of the great road adventures. Natural wonders such as that mighty gash in the earth at Fish River Canyon and the wildlife utopia of Etosha National Park enthrall, but it's the lonely desert roads, where mighty slabs of granite rise out of swirling sands, that will sear themselves in your mind. It's like a coffee-table book come to life as sand dunes in the world's oldest desert meet the crashing rollers along the wild Atlantic coast.

Among all this is a German legacy, evident in the cuisine and art nouveau architecture and in festivals such as Windhoek's legendary Oktoberfest. Namibia is also the headquarters of adventure activities in the region, so whether you're a dreamer or love hearing the crunch of earth under your boots, travel in Namibia will stay with you long after the desert vistas fade.

When to Go

Windhoek



Jun–Oct Book months in advance. Temperatures soar by September.

May & Nov Cheaper accommodation. Heavy rains sometimes in November, May is mild.

Dec–Apr Humidity and high temperatures can make days unpleasant. Prices are low.

WINDHOEK

POP 325,860

If Namibia is Africa for beginners, then Windhoek is very much its capital in more than name only. It's the sort of place that divides travellers, with those who love it for the respite it offers from the rigours of life on the African road facing off against those who find it a little too 'Western' for their African tastes. And they're both right: Windhoek is a modern, well-groomed city where office workers lounge around Zoo Park at lunchtime, tourists funnel through Post St Mall admiring African curios and taxis whizz around honking at potential customers. Neobaroque cathedral spires, as well as a few seemingly misplaced German castles, punctuate the skyline, and complement the steel-and-glass high-rises.

Such apparent incongruities aside, Windhoek makes a great place to begin or break a journey through Namibia or rest at journey's end. The accommodation choices, food variety, cultural sights, shopping and African urban buzz give it an edge not found anywhere else in Namibia.

Sights

Zoo Park

PARK

(Map p248; ☀️ dawn-dusk) **FREE** Although this leafy park served as a public zoo until 1962, today it functions primarily as a picnic spot and shady retreat for lunching office workers. Five thousand years ago the park was the site of a Stone Age elephant hunt, as evidenced by the remains of two elephants and several quartz tools found here in the early 1960s. This prehistoric event is honoured by the park's prominent **elephant column**, designed by Namibian sculptor Dörthe Berner. A rather anachronous mate to the elephant column is the **Kriegerdenkmal**, topped by a rather frightening golden imperial eagle, which was dedicated in 1987 to the memory of German Schutztruppe soldiers who died in the Nama wars of 1893–94.

★ Christuskirche

CHURCH

(Map p248; Fidel Castro St) **FREE** Windhoek's best-recognised landmark, and something of an unofficial symbol of the city, this German Lutheran church stands on a traffic island and lords it over the city centre. An unusual building, it was constructed from local sandstone in 1907 and designed by architect Gottlieb Redecker in conflicting neo-Gothic and art nouveau styles. The resulting design

looks strangely edible, and is somewhat reminiscent of a whimsical gingerbread house. The altarpiece, the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, is a copy of the renowned work by Rubens.

Daan Viljoen Game Park

WILDLIFE RESERVE

(☎️ 061-232393; per person/vehicle N\$40/10; ☀️ sunrise-sunset) This beautiful wildlife park sits in the Khomas Hochland about 18km west of Windhoek. You can walk to your heart's content through lovely wildlife-rich desert hills, and spot gemsboks, kudus, mountain zebras, springboks, hartebeests, warthogs and elands. Daan Viljoen is also known for its birdlife and over 200 species have been recorded, including the rare green-backed heron and pin-tailed whydah. Daan Viljoen's hills are covered with open thornscrub vegetation that allows excellent wildlife viewing, and three walking tracks have been laid out. There's also an on-site luxury **lodge** (☎️ 061-232393; www.sunkarros.com; camping N\$260, s/d chalets from N\$1774/2818; @).

Heinitzburg Castle

CASTLE

(Map p248; 22 Heinitzburg St) **FREE** Uphill from Robert Mugabe Ave are the three Windhoek 'castles', including the 1914 Heinitzburg, which today houses a hotel (p249) and fine restaurant (p250). The other castles, Schwerinsburg and Sanderburg, are nearby.

Independence Memorial Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p248; ☎️ 061-302236; www.museums.com.na; Robert Mugabe Ave; ☀️ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** Opened in 2014, this museum is dedicated to the country's anticolonial and independence struggle. The first floor tells the story of Namibia under colonial rule, with the next floor up shifting gears to the resistance movement, while the top floor is dominated by the road to independence. Don't miss taking the glass elevator up the outside of the building for great views out over Windhoek. There's a statue of founding president Sam Nujoma outside.

National Museum of Namibia

MUSEUM

(Map p248; ☎️ 061-302230; www.museums.com.na; Robert Mugabe Ave; ☀️ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 3–6pm Sat & Sun) **FREE** The excellent display on Namibia's independence at the country's historical museum provides some enlightening context to the struggles of this young country. But probably the most interesting part of the museum is the rock-art display, with some great reproductions; it would definitely be worth a nose around before heading to see rock art at the Brandberg or Twyfelfontein. It's housed in Windhoek's