

RICHTERSVELD 4 X 4 ADVENTURE

Begins in Cape Town *Duration* 8 days *Highlights* Namaqualand, Orange River, Richtersveld National Park

The hauntingly beautiful Richtersveld National Park lies in the great oxbow bend of the mighty Orange River, in the far north-west corner of South Africa. It is a true mountain desert, with contorted rock formations, complex geology, abandoned diamond diggings, sandy river beaches, rough tracks to nowhere and arid plains that stretch as far as the eye can see. Surreal silhouettes of Half-Mens and giant aloes stand in stark relief against cobalt skies.

Yet, despite its harshness, it is a very fragile ecosystem, prone to over-utilisation but permeated with an all-pervading aura of peace, solitude and tranquillity. In spite of its sparse vegetation the park protects one of the highest concentrations of endemic succulents on earth.

We offer an insightful tour of this remote desert jewel, using a specially designed 4x4 vehicle.



INTO THE HEART OF NAMAQUALAND Day 1



Our safari begins as we leave suburbia, and travel northward through the fertile Swartland with its endless rolling wheatfields and distant mountains. We enter the Olifants River Valley at Citrusdal and, bypassing Clanwilliam, we head for our lunch stop at Van Rhynsdorp. Our route then takes us across the parched plains of the Knersvlakte, where we pause to look for interesting succulents that thrive on the endless white quartz pebble beds, so unique to the region. These plants have adapted to conserve moisture, and to survive searing heat and freezing winters that are all part of life here. The dramatic rounded granite domes of Namaqualand gradually unfold before us, and our overnight stop is at the comfortable Kamieskroon Hotel.

Stay at Kamieskroon Hotel (1 night)

THE DIAMOND COAST Day 2

We tour central Namaqualand today, marvelling at the mountainous scenery. Later we head for the coast, stopping en route to explore Springbok and then down the picturesque Anenous Pass to Port Nolloth. This harbour town was once the only transshipment point for transporting copper ore to Cape Town. We explore the interesting harbour and relics of the copper trade, and more modern industries supported by diamond mining. In the late afternoon you can enjoy a walk on the beach and the fresh west coast air. The lonely distant clanging of a bell-bouy in the narrow coastal channel into the harbour has guided many a sailor on mist shrouded days - an almost-romantic sound to lull you to sleep tonight.

Stay at Scotia Hotel, Port Nolloth (1 night)



ALEXANDER BAY AND THE ORANGE RIVER Day 3



We head northwards along the coastline, stopping in the diamond mining town of Alexander Bay. Attractions include a huge field of colourful lichens. Depending on the water level, we may be able to visit the mouth and flood plains of the Orange River. Later we follow the course of the Orange River to enter the park at Sendelingsdrif on the western boundary of the !Ai-Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. The core of the national park on the South African side is a contractual area



where nomadic Nama stockmen still herd their stock, following the seasons as they have done for centuries. We settle in at our chalets overlooking the river, each constructed to resemble a miner's cottage, fully equipped, cosy and comfortable. Your guide will be doing the catering - such as braai's under the stars. **Stay at Sendelingsdrif Rest Camp (4 nights)**

EXPLORING RICHTERSVELD NATIONAL PARK Day 4 - 6

During these days we will be exploring the mountain wilderness of the Richtersveld. Our routes



take us up and over the dramatic twists and turns of Helskloof and Akkedis Pass. We stop often to browse and ramble, looking for interesting plants in this treasure trove of endemic vegetation. The desert landscapes are fascinating and varied, with colourful mountains, huge plains and superb river scenery. With our rugged 4X4 vehicle we negotiate narrow gorges, steep tracks and stream crossings. We enjoy al fresco



Landscape-catered lunches, and soak up the peace and tranquillity of this mountain desert. At times our route takes us down to remote parts of the Orange River, the lifeline

that meanders through this often inhospitable terrain.



On our last day in the park we take it easy, with a relaxed excursion to Pootjiespram, on the southern bank of the Orange River. We explore the rocky floodplain, searching for semi-precious stones which have been washed downstream over the millennia. On the way back we stop to seek diminutive succulents, which grow out of seemingly solid rock, and examine and discuss the complex geology of the region. Back in camp we have a light lunch and a relaxing afternoon by the river, taking a stroll to look for birds, or simply resting at our chalets.



REMOTE SETTLEMENTS Day 7



We pack up and leave the National Park, heading back for Namaqualand. Our route will take us southward, via dramatic geological formations and a few remote settlements. Large tracts of the area have been proclaimed as a Conservancy, which is run by the Richtersveld community, and although stock farming is the main economic feature, strict carrying capacities and veld



management practices have been instituted. The three main settlements are at Kuboes, Eksteenfontein and Lekkering. Our stopover tonight is at the Okiep Country Hotel, in the heart of Namaqualand, where we enjoy fine food and wine in comfortable and congenial surroundings. **Stay at Okiep Country Hotel (1 night)**

SOUTHWARD THROUGH NAMAQUALAND Day 8

Leaving Okiep, we pack up and head southward through the mountainous areas of central Namaqualand. One does not have to be here in the flower season to appreciate the beauty of this region with its sweeping, distant vistas and spectacular granite domes. By midday we reach Clanwilliam where we have a pleasant last lunch together. In the afternoon we approach busy Cape Town, with memories of Quiver Trees and Half-Mens plants; multi-coloured mountains and sandy river beds; and remote tracks and trails still fresh in our mind. We bid farewell to our travel companions, and you are delivered safely back to your door.

