

Drifters' *Ultimate Africa* 26 day Cape Town to Johannesburg Tour (South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe)

Tracy Provest

Type of tour

This is a small group, accommodated adventure tour in a 4WD truck run by [Drifters](#). We got an amazing deal through Kogan. Others had booked direct. We had travellers from the Virgin Islands, Netherlands, Germany and Australia.

Brief outline of tour

From paddling on the Orange River to walking around the rim of Fish Canyon (second in size to the Grand Canyon), close encounters with African animals, village visits, the desert, exploring the Okavango Delta, Chobe River, Victoria Falls and Limpopo River – there is something for everyone on this tour. It started in Cape Town and concluded in Johannesburg.

Twelve passengers (maximum) on an 18-seater 4WD truck has advantages and disadvantages. The roads are disgusting and sometimes there are more potholes than not. The elevated view is a distinct advantage. Some days are long (and many with early starts), but this allows pre-dusk arrival and African sunsets are hard to beat (7,200 km in 26 days).



Major highlights of the tour

Too many – it depends what you are into. One of the delights of this tour is that there were so many different experiences.

Starting in **Cape Town** your first experiences are either climbing Table Mountain or the Lions Head. Dinner along the waterfront (much like Darling Harbour) allowed for the group to meet. The day at Cape of Good Hope introduced us to our first African animals and included a great wine tasting of reasonably priced wine (some of which we purchased for future consumption).

The highlight of **Dog Stone Bay** was not staying in the 'kennels' or the Dog Stone (hit by lightning and no longer resembling a dog) but the 43 cocktails at the local watering hole.

Orange River delighted with great accommodation and a day on the river. A 12km paddle in the morning through spectacular countryside with diverse birdlife was followed by an optional more challenging afternoon paddle.

Fish River Canyon was spectacular – made more so by the rare mist that rolled in.



The Namib Desert

Our first taste of 'real' Africa came with the company-owned lodge in the **Namib Desert** (by far the nicest of their 'Greenfire' lodges). Plains in front, sand dunes to climb. Our evening safari included spotting a rare aardwolf, a variety of 'boks' (springboks), ostrich nests and meerkats.

If you ever wanted to climb a huge sand dune then 'Big Daddy' in **Sossusvlei** is calling your name. Tour groups either climb (and roll down) the dune or cross the eerie salt pan. We opted for the pan.

Swakopmund was an interesting town to explore. In Walvis Bay the seals were an experience for the nose as well as the eyes – both smelly and plentiful! The fascinating 'small 5' optional tour was also worth doing from here. Try the springbok or oryx steaks at the pub for dinner – best meat ever!

Brandberg Mountain and its White Lady rock paintings yielded lots of evidence of elephants, leopards and close encounters with rock hyrax, commonly known as 'dassies'.

Etosha National Park – If you're in Africa for the animals then you won't be disappointed when you reach this place. Choosing to travel in August we found that lots of animals were concentrated at the waterholes. Here, being in the truck really benefitted us. There were elephants, giraffes, zebras, springbok, oryx, black rhinos, lions – my photos tell the story better than any words!



The Okavango Delta – It took four hours by boat to reach our tented accommodation which was a bird watcher's paradise. It was also an animal heaven. Hippos came out of the water for an evening stroll. A 15 minute walk took an hour and a half because of elephant encounters. The mokoro (wooden canoe) poling experience was worthwhile. The helicopter flight over the delta was amazing. Safari coloured clothing was essential for safety!



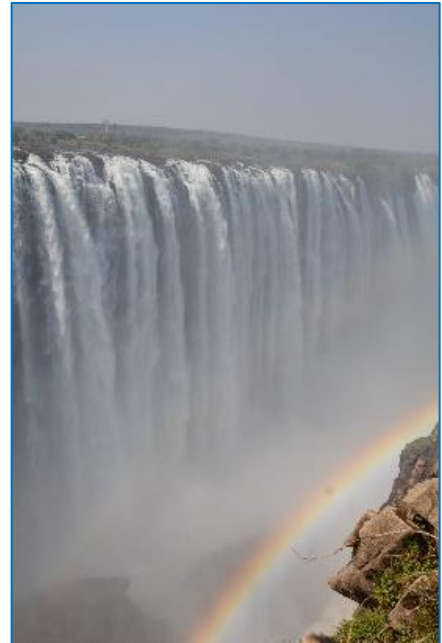
It is hard to beat watching young elephants at play while crossing the Chobe River in a boat.

Botswana – 'Kalahari Ferari' (the donkey) is very common in Botswana as a mode of transport. It also has fascinating villages. A village walk near Maun includes the village children all over you and a school visit. Well worth it but expect to buy food for the kids so have some local money on you.

Victoria Falls was well worth an afternoon exploration – but wear walking shoes and take a poncho. My opinion is that these falls sit in between Iguassu and Niagara in brilliance. It has a very commercial town with interesting places to eat and lots of African game meats to try.

An open 4WD safari in the Hwange Conservation Area, a stay at Elephant Lodge, Matobo and a walking safari to white rhinos rounded off our last few days. Sitting in a hide watching the elephants and buffalo literally an arm's length away is something no-one will ever forget.

Our tour guide driver was excellent. We made many friends. We arrived home exhausted but exhilarated.



Contributor details

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Tracy was Principal of Ulladulla High School from 2003-2013. Since retiring from the Department she has been involved in a variety of activities including developing a wellbeing student diary, NSW SES leadership and travel off the beaten track. Tracy is a Life Member of the NSWSPC and continues her interest in learning.