



**BIRDING TOUR NAMIBIA, OKAVANGO AND VICTORIA FALLS:
GENERAL INFORMATION**



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This 18-day birding adventure includes three countries, Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia. In Namibia we bird the Namib Coast and Namibian Escarpment for the host of species that inhabit only northern Namibia and southern Angola. In addition we will see one of the greatest shorebird spectacles on the African continent (plus find localized species such as Damara Tern and Chestnut-banded Plover). We also bird the woodlands, rivers, and swamps of the Caprivi Strip and Botswana. These areas are inhabited by a phenomenal diversity of birds. Birding around the stunning Victoria Falls can also be very rewarding. The entire trip mixes truly unforgettable birding with impressive and unbelievably diverse scenery. Although the trip focuses on the endemics and specials, we will end up with an impressive list also of other birds as well as loads of mammals.

Namibia's climate is typical of semi-desert terrain, hot days, and cool nights. The coastal regions are cooled by the cold Benguela current, causing fog and inhibiting rainfall. Over the central plateau in the country, which is higher up, temperatures are understandably lower. With 300 days of sunshine on average per year, Namibia is truly a sunny place. Only during the summer months from November to April does rain occur, mostly as heavy thunderstorms. Then the usually dry riverbeds become saturated with torrents of muddy water in a very short time. It is during this time that the sun-scorched land comes to life and develops a colorful horizon-to-horizon floral carpet within a few days. The interior enjoys two rainy seasons: the short season is between October and December, marked by frequent thunderstorms. The longer season is from mid-January to April. Summer is from October to April. Temperatures can reach 40 °C, which drops at night to cool levels. Average daily temperatures range from 20 to 34 °C. Winter is from May to September with wonderful warm days, which are contrasted by very cold nights when temperatures often drop to below freezing.

On this trip we expect very hot weather in the desert. Further east toward Victoria Falls we expect hot and humid weather. The weather can be surprisingly cool on the coast, even in summer, so please be prepared for all weather but generally expect heat to be the main problem. It might rain, but since the areas visited are typically dry we don't expect it to interrupt birding very much.

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

Dangerous Animals

We will be visiting areas inhabited by venomous snakes, although as usual we will be very lucky to see any. We recommend hiking boots, jeans/long trousers, and a good dose of care to minimize the danger of snakebites. We do not take anti-venom on our tours but will try and rush you to a private hospital if you do get bitten (although we will often be in *extremely remote* places); your own travel insurance (especially medical insurance) is crucial. In game reserves, where large predators freely lurk, it is illegal for very good reasons to alight from one's vehicle except in rest camps and picnic areas. Scorpions and spiders may also cause problems.

Malaria and other diseases

We strongly recommend taking anti-malaria precautions. Any of the following three drugs is highly effective as a malaria preventative measure (albeit not 100 percent due to resistant strains of malaria):

Malarone® (atovaquone/proguanil),
Doxycycline, and
Lariam® (mefloquine).

Mosquito repellent, long trousers/jeans, and long-sleeved shirts, particularly at night when malaria (*Anopheles*) mosquitoes bite, are advised in addition to the drugs.

In the unlikely event that one still contracts malaria after taking anti-malaria drugs and other precautions the disease can still be easily treated if diagnosed soon after symptoms develop: suspect malaria if 'flu-like' symptoms develop within a few months after visiting Namibia. If it is malaria it can be treated with an alternative to the prophylactic that you chose.

The Centers for Disease Control website, particularly the section on malaria in southern Africa, is very informative: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/safrica.htm>

Please do carefully read

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/namibia>

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/botswana>

You can also take a look at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/zambia>, but please be aware that we only venture into a tiny part of Zambia near Botswana/Namibia, so the countrywide text for Zambia does not really apply to this tour – the Botswana and especially Namibia sections are far more relevant here.

Crime

Although you will find that the people of Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia are generally friendly, helpful, and kind, crime is always a possibility (as it is virtually worldwide). We urge you to be aware that crime is possible (although unlikely) throughout the trip – **please take very good care of your personal belongings and don't leave valuables visible in the vehicle when no one is with it.**

ELECTRICITY

Electricity is 220-240V. If you intend to recharge video batteries etc. in your hotel room you will need an international adapter (3 round prong in a triangular pattern, [ITA Type D/M](#) for Namibia, [ITA Type D/G](#) for Botswana, and [ITA Type C/D/G](#) for Zambia). Note: If you are from North America or elsewhere that does not have 220-240V electricity, then do check all equipment that you plan on charging to see if it is 110/120–220/240V compatible. If that is the case you only need an adaptor to plug the US/Canadian/etc. plugs into. If your equipment is only listed as 110-120V then you will need a converter to convert the electric current to 220-240V.

SOME THINGS WE RECOMMEND YOU BRING

General list for all tours – specific destinations may need further recommendations

(Please note that space in the vehicle may be fairly limited, but we understand that birders do need lots of equipment! There will be opportunities for laundry.)

Binoculars (the guides cannot lend theirs)

A spotting scope and tripod or window mount (optional)

Field guides

Any other birding equipment

Photographic equipment

Spare batteries for photographic and other gear

Flashlight/torch/headlamp with spare batteries

Toiletries

Personal medication (including anti-malaria drugs). We recommend packing important medication (and a change of clothes) in your hand luggage in the unlikely event of lost luggage.

Some countries might require a valid Yellow Fever Certificate, and we advise visiting a travel clinic or your family doctor and visiting the Centers for Disease Control website for health advice. Rain gear (little rain expected on this trip, but we might have some rain)

Alarm clock

Passport and if required, visas (you can get a Zambian visa at the border – will need US\$ cash for it – usually around \$50). Please note that those wanting to cross into Zimbabwe on foot to see Victoria Falls from the other side (across from Livingstone, Zambia) will have to pay for an additional (Zimbabwean) visa, the cost of which changes quite often but can be as high as US\$100 (unfortunately, some nationalities are charged a lot more than others, too).

Copies of passport, medical insurance policies, and other important documents, which can be left with the Birding Ecotours office or at your home.

Money for drinks, gifts, tips (although tips at restaurants during the tour are included), items of a personal nature, etc. Traveler's checks are often difficult to use, except in the USA, but Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted, including for drawing local currency at ATMs.

Hiking boots plus another pair of shoes and sandals

Swimming gear

Cap/hat and sunglasses

Sunscreen and lip sun protection

Mosquito repellent

Long-sleeved clothes as a precaution against biting insects

Comments specific to this tour

In Namibia, Botswana, and Zambia we expect the weather to be warm to very hot during the day, and often mild at night. We do this tour at the best time for birds, but the disadvantage is the heat. However, the coast can sometimes be foggy and quite cool, and we recommend bringing sweaters, windbreakers, and long pants at least for the coastal part of the trip. Inland the Namib Desert is often extremely hot, but dry, whereas the Caprivi can be very hot and humid, even at night. So hot weather clothes are recommended, but long trousers, hiking boots, and long sleeves, although uncomfortable in hot weather, will help prevent snakebite and sunburn. There is a chance of rain, especially in the Caprivi, the Okavango, and at Victoria Falls.

EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Our emergency contact numbers are as follows (please note that the “+27” should be substituted by a “0” if dialing from within South Africa):

Birding Ecotours office: Nadia: +27 72 211 9863

Fax: +27 21 592 7438

E-mail (which is checked almost daily): info@birdingecotours.com

FIELD GUIDES

Birds

Please refer [to our online resource for field guides and apps](#).

Mammals

Stuarts' Field Guide to Mammals of Southern Africa by Chris and Mathilde Stuart, Struik Publishers. 2015

Smithers' Mammals of Southern Africa – a field guide. Edited by Peter Apps. 1996

Reptiles

Field Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Southern Africa by Bill Branch, Struik Publishers. 1998 - Excellent

Butterflies

Field Guide to Butterflies of South Africa by Steve Woodhall, 440-page paperback. 2005 – the best of those available

Sasol First Field Guide to Butterflies and Moths of Southern Africa by Simon von Noort, 56-page paperback. 1999

Insects

Field guide to Insects of South Africa by Mike Picker, Charles Griffiths and Alan Weaving, Struik Publishers. 2004