



TAKE BETTER PHOTOS IN NAMIBIA

A step-by-step Online Training Course

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www.take-better-photos-in-namibia.com

MODULE 1: NAMIBIA IN A NUTSHELL

Here's What You'll Learn In This Module:

- Which photographic conditions you can expect in Namibia
- How your travel dates will influence your Namibia image portfolio
- The daily schedule you need to follow to NOT miss the best photo light
- How to BEST experience Namibia's grand wilderness & capture truly amazing images
- Which crucial mistakes you MUST AVOID to NOT endanger yourself & your photographic success in Namibia

1. Photographic conditions you can expect in Namibia.

Namibia has what we call **photo-friendly weather**. It's mostly sunny, dry and hot as it's dry season for more than 8 months per year.

Namibia is one of the countries with the highest number of sunshine hours per year, and it has this 'summer feeling' that everybody coming to Namibia just loves.

In terms of your photography this means that the weather is quite predictable & that your photo shoots are therefore very easy to plan – with very few surprises such as a sudden rain storms or a thick cloud cover.

Exceptions do occur e.g. during the rainy season, which lasts from January to April, when you may experience clouds or an overcast sky or even heavy rainstorms (we'll talk more about this in later modules).

Another exception is the fog that occurs along the coastal region, which is very common there i.e. in the mornings.

When you begin to plan a visit to Namibia you'll soon realize that it's an **enormous country**. On your photo trip through Namibia you will travel long distances between your photo destinations & accommodation, which means that you'll spend many, many hours on the road. Also on your daily drives to photo spots or on your photo safari in Etosha for example you'll be sitting in your car again.

What you need to know for your proper planning is that most roads are gravel roads, and they can have varying conditions. When they have been graded they are quite good to drive on, but when the grader has broken down or when there is high traffic in the prime tourist season, then gravel roads can be very corrugated, which means that you must drive much slower.

Therefore try to plan realistically, so that you don't arrive too late at your overnight destination and maybe miss your evening photo session.

Coming from Europe or the US most people would estimate that they can cover 100 km in 1 hour on long distances. For Namibia's gravel roads this is very unrealistic. We recommend that you schedule 60 – 70 km/h as your average speed for long distances and about 30 km/h or less on your photo safaris.

For us passionate photographers Namibia truly is a photographic paradise, which offers a variety of **stunning landscapes**. The most well-known and one of our personal favorites is the Namib Desert and especially the vast dune landscape near the world-famous Sossusvlei. Then Namibia also offers typical African savannas with endless grass plains & bush and also very beautiful desert mountains, such as the Brandberg & Spitzkoppe. We are going to show you many more of Namibia's amazing & photogenic landscapes in the coming modules.

One thing that we CAN promise you is that you are going to be awed by Namibia's scenery almost everywhere as a first timer AND again and again as a return visitor to Namibia.

So we urge you to NOT RUSH through Namibia, rather come back for more later and to plan several overnight stays in a few of your favorite areas. Not only will this allow you to really get the feel for a specific place – and great memories later - but it will also increase your photo opportunities & variety of photographs AND absolutely reflect in a better quality of your images.

The other draw card for us passionate photographers is Namibia's **abundant wildlife**. Namibia is home to the typical African wildlife that we love to photograph, such as elephants, giraffe, zebra, lion and leopard, to mention just a few.

But you'll also meet a number of smaller wildlife, which can be equally attractive to capture in images, such as Black-backed jackals (here you see cute jackal pups playing), but also Cape foxes, Bat-eared foxes, Ground squirrels or the African wildcat.

Namibia is really teeming with wildlife not only in national parks, but also in other protected areas & private game reserves, and also on farmland. Studies have revealed that the majority of Namibia's cheetah population for example lives on farmland, not in protected areas.

In terms of wildlife photography we would like to point out that the wildlife in the Etosha National Park is the least shy in Namibia, as the animals are used to people in the mean-time. Since hundreds of thousands of visitors come through Etosha every year the wildlife doesn't see people i.e. in cars as a threat anymore. This means that you'll get quite close to the animals & have better photo opportunities for portraits & also great wildlife behavior in Etosha than in other areas of Namibia (we'll talk more about this in upcoming modules).

2. How your travel dates will influence your Namibia image portfolio

You'll need to know that Namibia has very distinct seasons. The rainy season, as I mentioned, lasts from January to April. The rains are relatively reliable in the central region, North and North-East of Namibia, and less so in the Western and Southern regions. The dry season goes from May to December and is usually divided into a cold dry season from May to August (with cool to quite cold nights and warm days) and a hot dry season from September to December (with warm nights & hot days).

In terms of photography you're going to get very different images depending on which season you visit Namibia, so we want to give a brief overview of the photographic highlights of each season.

One of the photographic highlights of the **RAINY SEASON** are clouds. You may encounter beautiful build-ups of clouds, like here over the Spitzkoppe mountains, dramatic & dark storm clouds or colorful sunset clouds. If you're lucky you may even witness beautiful rainbows that are quite visible because of Namibia's great vistas. A short few days after a great storm has fallen you'll experience a lush green grass cover, like here on Etosha's grass plains with Burchell's zebras. Sometimes you'll also find amazing carpets of wildflowers, like here on the dunes near Sesriem, which make for wonderful images. If you're very lucky, you may get the opportunity to witness the flooding of some of Namibia's seasonal rivers. As you may know, Namibia only has a few perennial rivers, but many dry rivers that only carry water in the rainy season. Witnessing & photographing such an event is very unique & special – both from the ground and also from the air, as is this image here, which is the Kuiseb River in flood, taken from a small plane. Then the rainy season is THE season of many newborn animals, as it's a great start for a new life with all the abundance of food & water, and it's the right time to photograph the many migratory birds that visit Namibia then. Sometimes the flooding of some rivers brings water into the desert, such as here to the Sossusvlei, which is quite a rare event that only happens every few years.

Summarized the RAINY SEASON give us photographers amazing photo opportunities, but unfortunately they are very difficult to predict. This means that you'll need to bring a lot of time to Namibia or you need to visit repeatedly to be able to photograph all of the above.

Now to the dry season. The photographic highlights of the **DRY SEASON** are an absolutely clear sky, void of any clouds or signs of

clouds. Dry & barren desert landscapes are also typical scenes of the dry season, and in Etosha for example high concentrations of animals at waterholes are a regular sight. One thing that's very important to know as a wildlife photographer is that it's only in the dry season that you'll see elephants & rhinos regularly. You'll see them seldom during the rainy season as they move off into more remote areas.

Summarized the dry season gives you many great occasions to photograph the typical (rather dry) Namibia and to get amazing wildlife images, as the animals gather around waterholes, almost waiting to be photographed.

3. The daily schedule you need to follow to NOT miss the best photo light

The best times for photography in Namibia are clearly the early morning, meaning from sunrise until maximum two hours after sunrise and the late afternoon, that is about two hours before sunset until sunset or shortly after. These times must be reserved for photography for the most flattering light for your images.

There are again exceptions: for example if you want to take special action shots, which may happen during the day, or if you experience weather conditions, such as overcast skies, which may allow you to photograph longer in the mornings or earlier in the afternoon. You may also want to photograph rhinos at your camp waterhole at night, such as here at the flood-lit waterhole at Okaukuejo in Etosha.

Overall that means: that all other activities, such as meals, rests, socializing & travelling should ideally happen at times OTHER than these best photo times!

In case you want to look up the sunrise & sunset times of your planned visiting dates to Namibia check out the PDF we've compiled for you.

Now we want to reveal

4. How you will have the BEST Namibia wilderness experience & capture truly amazing images

This is a very important point that can make a great difference for your photography. For us it's pretty clear that you first need to FEEL the magic & essence of Namibia to be able to capture it in great photographs. That means: use your senses and really try to See, Hear, Feel, Smell & Taste Namibia in all its beauty. Also open your heart & listen to your emotions: get excited, awed, be happy out there in the wilderness. This will firstly give you an amazing wilderness experience, which you'll remember forever, and it will reflect greatly in your images. We've written about this in our FREE eBook 'Feel Namibia – A Travel Guide for the Soul', which many of you will have read already. If you haven't or would like to read it again it's included in the course as a PDF.

What's required to be able to take Namibia in, to FEEL Namibia is that you bring enough time with, and peace and quietness. So a rushed trip and a very packed itinerary will not do you any good. Keep this in mind when you're planning your Namibia visit.

Finally we'd like to warn you of

5. Crucial mistakes you MUST AVOID to NOT endanger yourself & your photographic success in Namibia.

We've seen many visitors misjudge the conditions in Namibia & therefore experience smaller inconveniences or even sometimes real life-threatening situations. So we thought it helpful to compile this list of mistakes that you should definitely avoid during your visit:

Many people underestimate the power of Namibia's sun. The intensity & radiation is extremely high in Namibia and people get often sunburnt or sometimes even get a heatstroke when using too little sun protection. Therefore put on enough sun screen oil & repeatedly, wear a hat or cap and bring good sunglasses.

When driving long distances, don't bring too little water on the road. Pack at least a 20 litres emergency water canister & one bottle of drinking water per person AND refill these when possible at stops along the way. It does happen that cars break down & you don't want to run out of water in Namibia's heat while you repair your tire or wait for help. Also don't take too little water on your photo safari or walk. Take at least one litre of water per person even for short walks.

It's also a crucial mistake to not bring spare tyres or not fix them in time. Bring two good spare tyres at all times – flat tyres are very common on Namibia's gravel roads – and if you've just exchanged a flat tyre with a spare tyre, fix the flat tyre a.s.a.p, ideally in the next garage along your trip. We've often had two flat tyres in a day's drive and it's very inconvenient to wait for a passing car to take you with your flat tyres to the next garage, have it fixed there, find a lift back to your car, put the

tires on, before you can continue your journey. It will certainly ruin your immediate itinerary & your planned photo session for the day.

Another important point is the travelling speed, I touched on already. It can be very dangerous to drive too fast on gravel roads – every year there are a few terrible accidents happening – so please don't go faster than 80 km/h, and if the road is bad, go even much slower. And slow down in curves as loose gravel can cause you to slide & roll your car. You don't want this to happen.

Driving at night can also be problematic especially because there is much wildlife on the road & hitting a huge kudu antelope can be life-threatening too. Therefore avoid it if possible or be highly alert if you have to drive at night & drive slowly.

Something else that can happen in Namibia which most visitors from Europe or the US think impossible is that you run out of fuel. It's not that you miscalculated your fuel consumption, but it can happen that the fuel station where you had planned to refuel doesn't have fuel at your time of visit. They may have run out unexpectedly or the expected fuel truck is delayed or has broken down ... it has all happened. Therefore we recommend that you fuel up regularly at every opportunity in remote areas, and if you have one, fill your spare tank and/or a canister.

Something else we want to mention is that you should avoid ignoring wilderness dangers. Namibia is a wild country with a variety of wildlife. So when you check into a new room or tent there is nothing wrong with checking in possible hiding places for snakes & scorpions. If you do find unwelcome guests remove them safely or ask for help from the staff of your accommodation establishment. Also mind your steps i.e. at night and also during the day after a rain storm: that's when snakes and scorpions love to be active.

Somewhat larger wildlife, such as elephants, rhino, lion and buffalo. can also be dangerous, but they usually give warning signs. Back up when they show you you're not welcome or too close.

And the last thing we want to mention is that malaria prophylaxis is recommended in Namibia for the Northern regions, i.e. during and after the rainy season. But it's best to discuss this with your doctor before coming to Namibia.

So this has been Module 1: Namibia in a Nutshell.

Now we would like you to take action:

- If you haven't yet planned your Namibia trip, contemplate in which season you'd rather photograph: in the rainy season or dry season? You don't have to decide now, but just ponder this question. We'll talk more about the various seasonal photo opportunities in the coming modules.

- If you've planned your Namibia trip already, check your schedule & if it's too tight, loosen it if you can.
- If you've booked already make sure you plan your travel times realistically, so you don't miss any of your planned photo sessions
- Have a look at the sunset/sunrise time-table & download it, if you like
- Read or re-read the 'Feel Namibia' eBook & download it

So thanks for listening & see you over at Module 2.