

Why Swakopmund in Namibia is a summer destination of choice

The Namibian town of Swakopmund was recently named the Town of the Year on Kyknet's *Kwela*. *Kwela* viewers select their Dorp van die Jaar (town of the year) in Southern Africa based on culture, activities, landscape, tourism and heritage.

Since this is a location that clearly has plenty to offer, Swakopmund local and general manager of Bon Hotel Swakopmund, Ross Hill, takes us through some of the highlights of this coastal town, especially what makes it a destination of choice for the upcoming summer vacation period.



Culture

Namibia's indigenous Herero people called the town *Otjozondjii* with today's name for the town derived from the Nama word *Tsoakhaub* – which later became Swakopmund. Visitors can enjoy local Herero food not found in the town's centre by taking a trip to Hafeni Cultural Village.

There travellers can enjoy indigenous foods like *mopani* worms and *omajowa* – a white mushroom found growing on desert termite mounds, commonly harvested by both the Herero and Ovambo people of Namibia. Other indigenous delicacies on offer include wild spinach, mashed beans and *oshifima* (maize flour porridge).

Hafeni Cultural village also offers township tours – which include visits with local families and traditional dance performances.

A road trip hotspot

Although Swakop – as it is commonly called by locals – is a coastal town, it is located in the heart of the Namib desert creating an opportunity for desert adventure activities like sandboarding, 4x4 or quad bike tours, as well as fishing, boating and coastal tours. The meeting of ocean and desert is one of the most beautiful natural sights Africa has to offer.

Although the full Namibian landscape includes other natural wonders such as wildlife, lush green oases and rolling deserts. A popular option for travellers is to explore Namibia by road in order to enjoy the country's full beauty.



Must-see spots on a road trip include Etosha, the country's largest wildlife sanctuary since 1907; Caprivi in the north-east, known for its lush green landscape; and Swakopmund, where visitors can witness the meeting of the Atlantic Ocean and the Namib Desert.

Many local 4x4 hire companies are based in Swakopmund, and offer the option of renting a vehicle following your arrival at Windhoek's Hosea Kutako International Airport and dropping the vehicle off at an agreed point at your end destination.

A trip back to the old world

Swakopmund is the capital of Erongo, Namibia's administrative district, and is the fourth-largest population centre in Namibia with nearly 45,000 inhabitants. The town was 'founded' in 1892 as the main harbour for the Imperial German colony.

As a result of this, the town still has many German-speaking residents with many tourists choosing Swakopmund for its rich German architecture. Historical architectural sights to visit include Die Kaiserliches Bezirksgericht or 'State House', built in 1901 to serve as the district's magistrates court. The Woerman House and Tower, built in 1894, was constructed to serve as a landmark for ships visiting Swakopmund before the famous lighthouse was built and completed in 1905.



Tourists wanting the full ‘old-world’ experience should definitely consider the famous Shosholongo Desert Express 12-day train trip from Pretoria to Swakopmund – which was relaunched in early 2019. Stops along the journey include Kolmanskop, Luderitz, Sossusvlei, Windhoek and Etosha and Swakopmund. The journey comes with game drives, food and beverages, daily tours of various South African and Namibian landmarks, wine and brandy tastings and accommodation.

A village

A visit to Swakopmund is a reminder of the familiarity and friendly charm of an African small town. Everybody knows everybody, neighbours are like family and guests are treated just the same with a welcoming arm.

Despite being a small town there are loads of events and activities taking place all year round, often as a result of the town’s Herero, Afrikaans, English and German heritage. Visitors can look forward to festivities like all-year desert running events, the Desert Ultra in November and German Oktoberfest in October.

Many events, such as the upcoming annual traditional German Weihnachtsmarkt Christmas Market, are held at The Dome, Swakopmund’s largest events centre, comprising of open conferencing, events and sports facilities, a small mall, gym, swimming pool and the Bon Hotel Swakopmund.

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