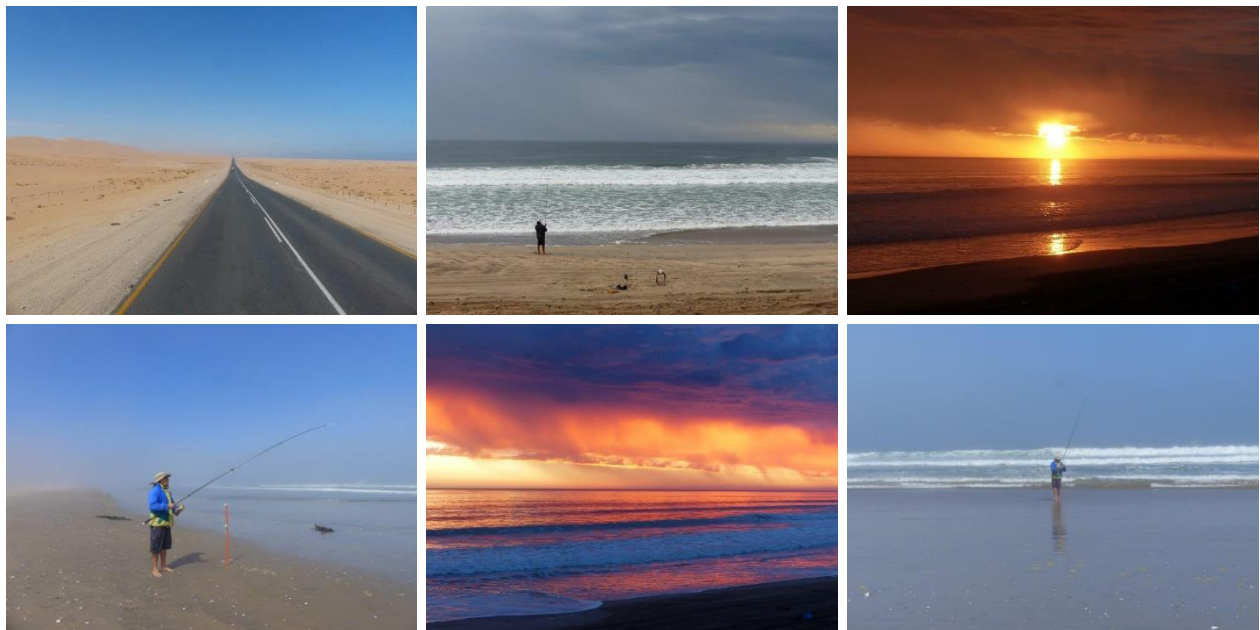


16.-18.5.2018 Vierkant Strand

South of Swakopmund there are a few popular beaches, mainly 'Vierkantstrand' and 'Langstrand'. With the newly obtained fishing license in his pocket Werner goes into action and secures dinner for us twice.



The weather is very entertaining and changes almost by the hour. Finally, the sun even comes through the fog.



In the evening we drive to Walvis Bay. The coastline along the road from Swakopmund to Walvis Bay has developed remarkably. The cities of Langstrand and Walvis Bay are slowly growing together, one holiday house follows the other.

20.5. 2018 Walvis Bay

Waking up at our camp on the public car park next to the Walvis Bay lagoon we get a big surprise when looking out of the window. There are Flamingos everywhere! They wade through the shallow water or stand on one leg and take a nap. Without breakfast we hurry out of the car to enjoy this spectacular Flamingo-view.



Next to the lagoon is a large salt mine where salt is extracted from the sea. Passing through the salt production pools, the road leads all the way out to the open sea. There are still thousands of flamingos everywhere, how impressive! We stay almost the entire day and relax on a nice beach enjoying the sun.



21.5.2018 Mirabib, Namib Naukluft Park

The fog and cold weather return, everything is grey in grey, so it is not hard for us to say goodbye to the coast and drive back inland. We fill up the truck, as in Walvis Bay the fuel is the cheapest in Namibia; stock up supplies and also give the Unimog a wash to get rid of the salt crust we accumulated driving along the coast line.

The car wash business is running well. Because of the weather conditions and ongoing floodings all cars are pretty dirty, no matter how careful one drives.



The further we drive inland the warmer it gets and the fog clears up. Our destination is the Mirabib campsite located in the Namib Naukluft Park. The road leads us past the desert research station Gobabib. The landscape is dead flat and the air is so clear that we can see the rock formation where we want to camp already hours before we actually arrive.



Mirabib is a nice spot, five campsites are arranged around the rock formation. We are lucky that one of the more wind-protected campsites is still available. The view across the plains is spectacular, one can see for kilometers. We grab our sundowner beer and enjoy the views.



22.5.2018 Mirabib, Namib Naukluft Park

In the morning we explore the rock formation and have a walk around. Afterwards it is time to take care of the Unimog, the drivers cabin will get a new wax coat. Due to being exposed to the strong sun for such a long time our Unimog is getting a bit pale around the nose.



The evening rewards us with another spectacular sunset. The landscape looks like being coated in gold, an amazing sight. It's like watching "Sunset TV".



23.5.2018 Solitaire

Our time in the northern Namib Naukluft Park is coming to an end, our next destination are the famous sand dunes of Sossusvlei.



The road leads us via Solitaire, a village approximately 180 km away. Prior to reaching Solitaire we cross once more the "Tropic of Capricorn". At summer solstice (midsummer) or "the longest day of the year" which is the 21st of December in the Southern Hemisphere, the sun stands at noon exactly vertical above the Tropic of Capricorn.

Afterwards, we drive a detour down a track leading to the Kuiseb Canyon, where Henno Martin and Hermann Korn were hiding from 1940 onwards for 2.5 years. This is the very fascinating true story of two German geologists who were travelling to former „Deutsch-Südwestafrika“, today’s Namibia, to research the Naukluft Mountains and its water resources.

As the second World War was about to begin they were afraid of being detained as hostile foreigners and decided to hide in this canyon, an area they knew very well from their research. It is so hot and extremely dry, to stay here and survive was a daily battle. Earlier, we have read their memoirs about this time ”If the war breaks out, we’ll go into the desert“ by Henno Martin, so it is even more interesting to visit the original location and to imagine how they lived and survived here.



Coming from the Kuiseb Pass we cross a gorge and while climbing out of it we see another Unimog parked up there. We stop spontaneously and get to meet Peter and Sabine. Funnily, we have seen their Unimog already in Windhoek at Uli’s Electrical workshop. Namibia is like a little village...

In the afternoon we reach Solitaire where we of course have to taste the famous apple pie of Percy „Moose“ McGregor. This apple pie has made it as the “best apple pie of Namibia” into almost every guide book. It tastes very refreshing, however, to be on the precise side, it is not an apple pie but an apple crumble...

In Solitaire, they have quite a good workshop and we want to check our exhaust silencer, which had a crack for a while, but now starts to make funny noises. As we have a closer look, we realize that the whole exhaust pipe leading to the silencer is basically broken already. The corrugated roads have taken their toll on the exhaust system. It turns out to be a major operation to get it fixed. Luckily, Robert is a good welder, he finds another piece of pipe, adjusts the diameter to fit and welds it to the silencer. In the evening we can continue our journey.



24.5.2018 Sesriem Canyon, Elim Dune

A last highlight for us on this trip are Sesriem and Sossusvlei, an absolute must-do for every visitor to Namibia. The camp site in Sesriem is better reserved in advance as it gets easily booked out. We are lucky and get a nice camp site in the last row near the desert with a large Camelthorn tree, offering plenty of shade. Sesriem has changed a lot, there are new lodges, next to the fuel station is a new private camp ground and the road to Sossusvlei is tarred now. However, our last visit was quite a few years ago.



We set up camp and have a rest during the hottest hours of the day, before we drive to the Sesriem Canyon. The canyon is in fact a deep gorge washed out from the flat landscape and can only be seen when right at the edge of it.



After walking through the gorge, we drive to the Elim Dune, as from here one can enjoy the sunset at 18:15pm. We did not expect it to be an almost 2 km long hike up the dune and toward its edge. But it is a nice evening workout and walking in this fine sand is actually fun.

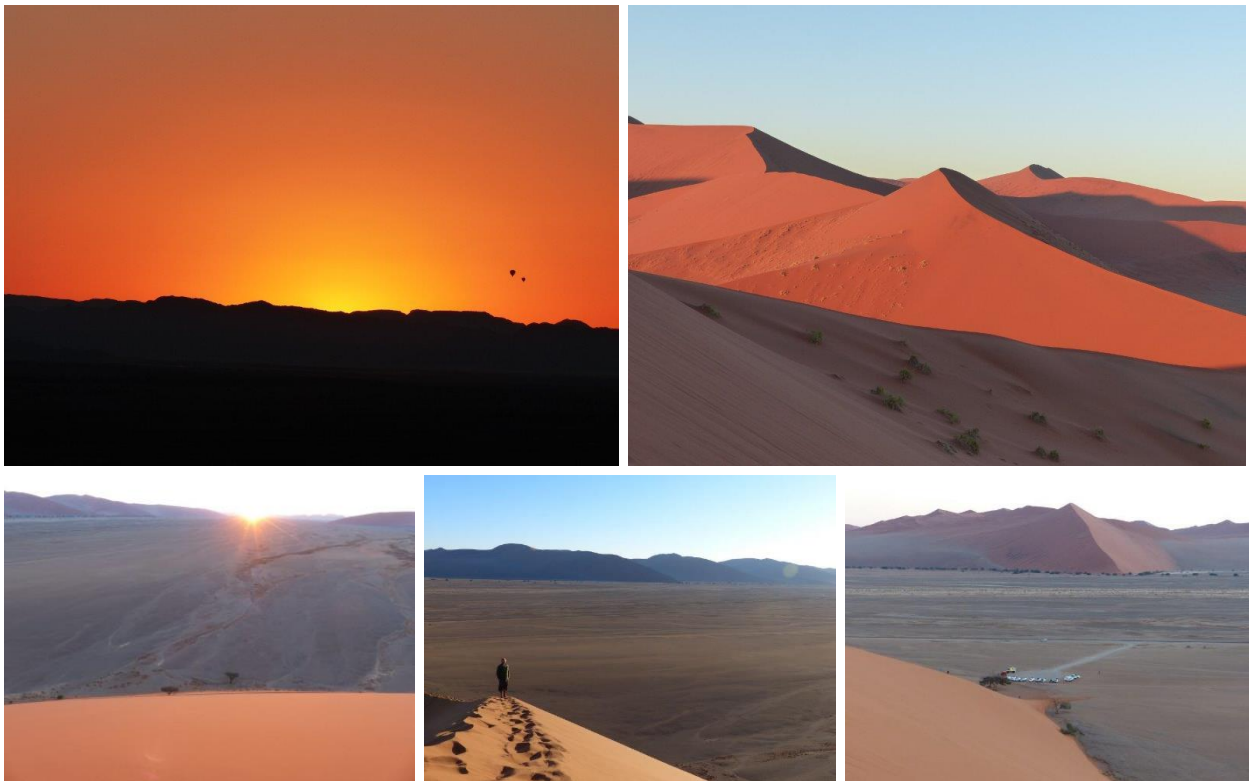




25.5.2018 Sossusvlei

The alarm goes off at 6:00a.m., “everyone” wants to be at the famous Dune 45 at 7:15a.m. to enjoy the sunrise. The gate to Sossusvlei opens at 6:30a.m. and there is already a queue of cars waiting for it to open. Then all these cars speed in a convoy on the tar road 40km towards Dune 45 and then further on to Sossusvlei.

On time we are on top of Dune 45, it is only 12 degrees early morning. The sun is slowly rising over the dunes, while two hot air balloons are rising into the air. The darkness of the night is fading, the sun paints the landscape in fresh colors, it starts to warm us up – a magic moment indeed.





As we descend from the dunes, the tour busses arrive and the dune is getting pretty crowded – unbelievable how busy it gets.

The good thing is, the wind will later erase all footprints and marks and Dune 45 will look tomorrow morning again as if no one has ever been here before.

It is another 20km to Sossusvlei, where we spend the day. The Sossusvlei is a salt-clay-pan embedded in the Namib desert. The river Tsauchab peters out here in the sand. The proof that we really experienced unusual high rainfall earlier, can be found here: The fact that the Deadvlei Pan still carries a bit of water is a rare phenomenon and happens only every few years.



We climb the highest dune called „Big Daddy“, which is supposedly with 350m of height one of the highest sand dunes in the world, and walk a large round of about 6 km through the sand dunes. These huge amounts of sand bring out the inner child and it is fun to watch how adults are sliding and rolling down the dunes screaming happily.

Why are sand dunes actually so fascinating to watch? One can not get enough and discovers all the time new formations and many shades of beige.





The whole time we already saw Oryx footmarks, some quite fresh and as we drive out of Sossusvlei, we are finally lucky to discover a real desert Oryx. We are one of the last cars leaving the vlei, driving back in the sunset.

To not miss the gate closing time at 7:15p.m. we have to hurry up. It's a bit silly that one has to speed through the landscape just to be at the gate in time. We think a gate closing time at 8:00p.m. would not make a big difference, but would allow all visitors to still enjoy the sunset and then drive back more relaxed and safely.

