Worldwide Quest presents to University of Guelph Alumni and Friends

NAMIBIA: A DESERT WILDLIFE AND LANDSCAPE SAFARI

October 21 – November 3, 2017

With Chris Earley, the University of Guelph Arboretum’s Interpretive Biologist and Education Coordinator

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Dear University of Guelph Alumni and Friends,

Namibia remains an anomaly in Africa. Though long settled by people, its arid climate and rugged terrain have left it in a relatively pristine state. It is in this context that we will discover landscapes and habitats to which even the most extraordinary superlatives won’t do justice. It also contains an eclectic mosaic of cultures that lend a feel that one can find nowhere else.

Our journey together begins in the capital city of Windhoek, where you will immediately feel the historic German influence. After becoming acquainted with the acacia woodlands of the Central Plateau, we continue along to our lodge near the biggest sand dunes in the world at Sossusvlei. We’ll explore the dunes on foot while taking extraordinary photographs and being on the lookout for resident wildlife. At Sandwich Bay we explore the important coastal wetlands and in Damaraland we travel dry river beds while on the lookout for desert-adapted African Elephants and more.

Etosha National Park is a quintessential wildlife experience; we’ll have excellent views of many large mammals such as Giraffe, Eland, Blue Wildebeest, Greater Kudu, Gemsbok, Springbok, Plains Zebra and the near-endemic Black-faced Impala, as they gather around the gleaming white salt pans and congregate at waterholes in the evening. We may also see both the White and Black Rhinoceros. The bird life is impressive throughout and there will many forms of less conspicuous wildlife too!

The University of Guelph’s very own Chris Earley helped to organize this itinerary. Join him on an adventure to unspoiled Namibia where you will see surreal landscapes, discover a rich natural and cultural heritage, meet Namibia’s friendly people and view wildlife to your heart’s content!

Kathy Wilson
Associate Director, Alumni Advancement
OUR ITINERARY

Saturday, Oct. 21: Arrive in Windhoek
Upon arrival we will drive to our lodge outside Windhoek, where we’ll have our orientation with Chris followed by a Welcome Dinner. A local astronomer will introduce us to the African night sky!
Overnight: Goche Gaunas Lodge, Windhoek  D

Sunday, Oct. 22: Windhoek
With its German architecture and street stalls, Windhoek is a combination of Europe and Africa. We’ll have a morning guided tour, followed by a cultural lunch and a township tour. Later, we’ll have a game drive at our lodge!
Overnight: Goche Gaunas Lodge, Windhoek  B, L, D

Monday, Oct. 23: Drive to Sossusvlei
Today we go towards the home to perhaps the highest dunes in the world. We’ll enjoy the lodge surroundings and have a sundowner game drive. We’ll sip cocktails and watch a spectacular sunset, plus enjoy the distinctive night sounds of the Namibian desert.
Overnight: Sossusvlei Lodge, Sossusvlei  B, L, D

Tuesday, Oct. 24: Sossusvlei
Early this morning we’ll drive to Sossusvlei’s dunes. We should have several dramatic photo opportunities! We’ll see dunes at various stages of colonization by vegetation plus some desert fauna. Later we’ll have a champagne breakfast on the dunes. We can take a gentle hike up dune and see the millennial dead trees at Deadvlei, a ‘signature site’. We’ll enjoy a special BBQ bush dinner.
Overnight: Sossusvlei Lodge, Sossusvlei  B, L, D

Wednesday, Oct. 25: Drive to Swakopmund
After breakfast we travel via the desolate Kuiseb Moon Valley towards the Atlantic Ocean and Swakopmund, which was an important German colonial harbour town, crossing the Tropic of Capricorn along the way. We’ll visit Swakopmund’s Kristall Gallerie, which has a noteworthy collection of minerals and semi-precious stones. Afterwards, we can enjoy leisure time to explore the palm-lined streets and well-kept gardens, and then dinner at a local restaurant.
Overnight: Swakopmund Hotel, Swakopmund  B, L, D

Thursday, Oct. 26: Excursion to Walvis Bay and the Kuiseb Delta
Today we’ll have a cruise in Walvis Bay. We’ll see pelicans, fur seals, one or two species of dolphin and more! We’ll stop at Bird Rock, an artificial guano island inhabited by 200,000 cormorants. We’ll enjoy a fish
barbecue aboard and may taste the celebrated local oysters with champagne. We may have 4X4 vehicle tour in order to visit the more remote Sandwich Harbour.

Later, we head to Kuiseb Delta, crossing salt pans and vegetation-covered hummock dunes, which shelter a variety of wildlife. After returning to Swakopmund, we’ll meet a noted anthropologist and Himba expert. This evening is at leisure and you may dine at a local establishment of your choice. It’s an opportunity to visit a German brewpub featuring schnitzel and bratwurst!

Overnight: Swakopmund Hotel, Swakopmund  B, L

Friday, Oct. 27: Drive to Twyfelfontein in Damaraland
Heading north along the Skeleton Coast we may stop to look at a mist-shrouded shipwreck, then continue into the Damaraland region interior. Here we find a rugged landscape of ancient water courses with open plains, massive kopjes and deep gorges. In the western part, endless sandy expanses sustain populations of desert-adapted African Elephants, Black Rhinoceros, Giraffe, Common Ostrich and Springbok. We’ll stop at a roadside shop where Herero and Himba ladies in traditional dress sell their local crafts. We’ll stay in the heart of the Twyfelfontein Uibasen Conservancy. The boulders that litter these slopes are dotted with thousands of paintings and engravings, only a fraction of which have been recorded. Among African rock art sites, Twyfelfontein is unusual in having both engravings and paintings, many of animals or geometric motifs. Later we’ll visit the Damara Living Museum and find out more about the area’s history.

Overnight: Twyfelfontein Lodge, Twyfelfontein  B, L, D

Saturday, Oct. 28: Twyfelfontein
This morning we explore the area’s rock paintings and engravings. There are about 2,500 rock engravings on 212 slabs of rock, with an additional 13 panels embracing further examples of rock paintings. Major engravings include “The lion with the kink in its tail” and “The giant giraffe”. We’ll also see the “Organ Pipes”, a series of dolerite pillars exposed by erosion.

After a rest, we depart on an afternoon game drive in search of the desert elephant in the ephemeral river valleys, sighting a variety of unusual plant species including the highly unusual near-endemic Welwitschia mirabilis, as well as Moringa and a variety of the Commiphora (myrrh) species. We’ll enjoy sundowner drinks before returning to the lodge.

Overnight: Twyfelfontein Lodge, Twyfelfontein  B, L, D

Sunday, Oct. 29: Drive to Etosha N.P.
We start the day with a tour of a Himba village. We’ll have lunch en route and continue to Etosha, one of Africa’s finest reserves. Etosha houses a multitude of mammal, bird, reptile, and amphibian species and, even one species of fish. Its namesake feature is the huge Etosha Pan, which appears to be the remnant of an inland lake. The park’s western areas support mainly Mopane scrub, whereas there are extensive woodlands of tall trees in the southern parts. The wildlife here superficially resembles that of the savanna plains elsewhere in Southern Africa but include several species endemic to the Namib Desert region. Our afternoon safari takes us out to observe elephants taking a bath with their young, groups of
Plains Zebras on their way to the watering hole, herds of Springbok, and perhaps a pair of Lions lazing under a bush. This is also a stronghold of the Black-faced Impala, a subspecies of Common Impala found only in Namibia and Angola.

Overnight: Taleni Etosha Village  B, L, D

**Monday, Oct. 30 - Tuesday, Oct. 31: Etosha National Park and Onguma Game Reserve**

We'll move eastward deeper into Etosha. A herd of upwards of 50 elephants might hold up any traffic as the members amble down the road. We'll enjoy a morning open vehicle game drive. Later, we'll meet our coach and continue to Onguma Game Reserve along Etosha's eastern border. Onguma covers 38,000 hectares and incorporates varied habitats where game roams freely. The latest addition to its abundant wildlife is a family of Black Rhinoceros. There are also more than 300 bird species recorded. We'll learn about rhino activity during our first afternoon drive. On our second day, we enjoy another full day game of viewing by heading into Etosha for a safari in open vehicles. After lunch back at the lodge, we'll have some chance to relax and explore the grounds. Later we'll enjoy a night drive for a different take on the region's wildlife!

Overnight: Onguma Bush Camp, Etosha  B, L, D

**Wednesday, Nov. 1: Drive to Okonjima**

We continue to Okonjima, a 55,000-acre game reserve featuring opportunities to see Cheetahs and Leopards. Okonjima is the home for the AfriCat Foundation, which is involved in research, education and outreach activities dedicated to conservation of Namibia's large carnivores. En route we'll stop at Lake Otjikoto, a rarity in being one of only two permanent natural lakes in Namibia. After arriving in Okonjima in the afternoon we'll have our first safari with a focus on Leopards. We'll enjoy a night drive after dinner!

Overnight: Okonjima Lodge  B, L, D

**Thursday, Nov. 2: Cheetah tracking, then return to Windhoek**

This morning we'll go on a Cheetah tracking safari. We'll then have brunch and a presentation by the Director of the AfriCat Carnivore Care & Information Centre and the AfriCat Rehabilitation Programme. She'll tell us much more about the work being done to ensure big cat preservation. We'll then continue to Windhoek. We'll enjoy a cocktail and Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant as we celebrate our amazing journey.

Overnight: River Crossing Lodge, Windhoek  B, L, D

**Friday, Nov. 3: Depart Windhoek**

Today we will be transferred to Hosea Kutako International Airport for our flights home or onwards to one of the post-trip extensions.

Note: The itinerary and accommodation is subject to change. Weather changes, logistical arrangements, or local events may require changes in the itinerary.
Botswana has some of the best wildlife areas on the African continent. With 38 percent of its land area devoted to national parks, reserves and wildlife management areas – for the most part unfenced – travel through many parts of the country has an unfettered feeling. You’ll experience Botswana by land and water at two fantastic safari camps. You’ll end this journey at Victoria Falls.

Friday, Nov. 3: Fly to Maun and onward to Okavango Delta
This morning you’ll transfer to the airport for your international flight to Maun, Botswana. You’ll then take a light aircraft flight to Camp Okuti, nestled on a lush palm-fringed island. Surrounded by clear waters that flow over yellow sands, Okuti offers some of the finest game and bird viewing in Botswana, making for spectacular photographic and viewing opportunities by mokoro (traditional canoe), boating and bush walks.
Overnight: Camp Okuti  B, L, D

Saturday, Nov. 4: Okavango Delta
Activities may include game drives in open safari vehicles, fishing, walks, exploring by mokoro or visiting Gadikwe Island to view the breeding bird colony. At day's end, relax around the campfire and enjoy the stillness of a star lit night.
Overnight: Camp Okuti    B, L, D

Sunday, Nov. 5 - Monday, Nov. 6: Flight to Kasane
There may be time for another game drive before your flight by light aircraft to Kasane. Our lodge, situated on the banks of the Chobe River and beside Chobe National Park, is an ideal base for exploration. During out time here, we’ll enjoy a combination of game rides and boat cruises that will provide different vantages.
Overnight: Chobe Safari Lodge    B, L, D

Tuesday, Nov. 7: Game drive in Chobe National Park, transfer to Victoria Falls
This morning we’ll enjoy one last safari at Chobe. We’ll then fly to Victoria Falls, the largest curtain of water in the world. They drop between 90m and 107m into the Zambezi Gorge. You’ll be met by our local representative and drive to the Victoria Falls Hotel, built in 1904 and exuding original colonial charm with recent modern refurbishments. The hotel lies within a vast manicured garden with unobstructed views of the Victoria Falls Bridge and the spray of the Falls. A private path leads you from the gardens to the entrance of the rainforest by an easy 10-minute stroll.
Overnight: The Victoria Falls Hotel    B, L, D

Wednesday, Nov. 8: Depart VFA Airport
The morning is free to enjoy the grounds before your homeward bound flights.

Extension cost: US$3495 based on double occupancy
TOUR COST

Tour Cost (per person): US$6295
Taxes and gratuities: US$350

Single Supplement: US$995
Please note that if you are travelling alone, and we cannot match you with a roommate, you will have to pay the single supplement for this trip. This will be collected at 90 days prior to departure.

Group Size: 14 – 22 participants

Included Features:
• Accommodations based on double occupancy in hotels listed or similar
• All activities as described in the itinerary
• Meals as specified in itinerary and bottled water
• Ground transportation, park entrance fees
• Airport transfers, if travelling as per the group flight itinerary
• Gratuities and taxes for group services
• Fully escorted by University of Guelph’s Chris Earley and our Namibian local leaders

Not Included:
• Return airfare from your home to Windhoek
• Fuel surcharges, if applicable
• Airport departure taxes, if any
• Airport transfers, if not travelling as per the group flight itinerary
• Alcoholic beverages and bar expenses
• Travel insurance
• Excess baggage charges
• Phone calls and items of a personal nature
• Additional transport arrangements required due to any emergency situation

Payment Details:
A non-refundable deposit of US$500 per person is required to reserve a space on this tour. A second deposit of $1000 will be required six months prior to departure. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.
STUDY LEADER

A long-time fixture at the University of Guelph, Chris Earley has been the Arboretum’s Interpretive Biologist and Education Coordinator for over 20 years. A self-proclaimed ‘nature geek’, he is a passionate educator, teaching a variety of bird, insect and art workshops at the Arboretum as well as designing signage and literature and leading tours. He also presents a variety of special lectures and labs for undergraduate and graduate classes. To expand his knowledge base, he recently completed a Master of Science degree at the University of Guelph studying the biology of an introduced paper wasp.

Chris is the author of five bird books published by Firefly Books: Warblers; Sparrows and Finches; Waterfowl; Hawks and Owls of Eastern North America; and Birds A-Z. Two other books, Caterpillars: Find - Identify - Raise Your Own and Dragonflies: Catching – Identifying – How and Where They Live, were written with his children as co-authors. His next book project called 100 Nature Hot Spots in Ontario: The Best Parks, Conservation Areas and Wild Places is due for release in spring 2016. Due to his work in the Ontario natural history community, Chris was awarded the Richards Education Award by Ontario Nature for “his significant contributions as an enthusiastic natural history educator over the past 25 years.”

Chris has been a professional expedition tour leader since 1999, travelling to places such as the Canadian Arctic, Greenland, East Africa, the Galapagos Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka and most recently, Namibia. He is well-regarded for his engaging and infectious style that gets everyone involved in the discovery experience. Chris looks forward to returning to Namibia with fellow members of the University of Guelph community!
WHAT TO EXPECT

Level of Difficulty: Easy
We will be doing most of our game viewing from the comfort of our safari vehicles. The trails have to be traversed carefully but are accessible to anyone who has normal walking ability and stamina. Note that roads are frequently bumpy and dusty and on some days we will drive four to five hours.

Weather
With a staggering 300 days of sunshine each year, Namibia is a year-round destination. Temperatures during our visit will range from 15°C to 29°C.

Accommodation
We will be staying in a range of comfortable lodges with private facilities.

TRANSPORTATION
We will be using a medium-sized 22-seater coach that is perfect for the local terrain.

Travel Documents
You will require a passport for this trip. Please ensure it is valid for at least 6 months beyond your scheduled return home. If you are a Canadian or U.S. passport holder, you do not require a tourist visa to visit Namibia and Botswana; however, you will need a visa for Zimbabwe; it can be obtained upon arrival. Further information on the procedure will be sent to you 90 days prior to departure.

Cancellation Policy
All payments are non-refundable, however you may transfer your initial deposit to another trip 90 days or more prior to your scheduled departure date. If you cancel within 90 days prior to trip departure, all associated trip costs are non-refundable. The tour price is quoted as a package. No partial refunds or credits will be given for services not used. In the event of a cancellation, you must notify Worldwide Quest immediately and in writing.

Travel Insurance
We urge you to ensure that you have adequate cancellation and medical insurance in place, should an unexpected event cause you to cancel or interrupt your trip. We will offer you Manulife insurance coverage. Medical insurance including emergency medical evacuation coverage is mandatory.

Terms and Conditions
For information about our terms and conditions, please refer to your booking form or our website. All participants booking with Worldwide Quest are covered by the terms of the Ontario Travel Industry Act (Worldwide Quest International, Ontario - License # 2667946).

The University of Guelph and its officers and employees, do not assume any responsibility for the financing, arranging or conducting of the tour. They shall not be liable for any damages or financial loss to person or property of any description that might occur in connection with the tour, however arising from the negligence, omission or otherwise for travel services arranged through Worldwide Quest International.
HOW TO BOOK

Please contact Worldwide Quest for more information and to book this tour.

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