



JOURNEYS



Under
Namibian
skies



Windhoek's
Olive Exclusive



Namibian
elephants

Where the Wild Things Star

Ambitious conservation efforts have put Namibia at the head of the safari class. STEPHANIE PEARSON explores the country's latest projects.

AGORAPHOBICS DON'T do well in Namibia. Almost twice the size of California, with a seemingly endless horizon, its territory is taking the lead on conservation thanks to the work of groups like the World Wildlife Fund and 76 locally managed communal conservancies that put an astonishing 42 percent of the country under protection management. Small wonder that Namibia has the most cheetahs in the world and growing populations of elephants, lions, giraffes, and rhinos. Plus, the water's clean, the roads are easy to navigate, and in the dry months of August through November, you're sure to spot the Big Five. Here's how to plan your next safari.

ARRIVE: Fly to the capital of Windhoek via Johannesburg (from \$1,500 round-trip from New York City; flysaa.com), then crash in a plunge-pool-equipped suite at the new Olive Exclusive hotel (from \$393 per night; theolive-namibia.com). Before leaving town, visit Na'an Ku Se, a nonprofit wildlife sanc-

> Trip of the Month

Ride past the yak farms and monasteries of the Tibetan Plateau on Team Pedaler's new 17-day cycling journey to Mount Everest Base Camp. You'll acclimatize in 11,975-foot Lhasa before making the seven-day, 450-mile ride. The trip offers great views of Everest and tops out at quad-busting, 17,125-foot Lappa Pass. \$4,495, all-inclusive; biketoursdirect.com —JAYME MOYE

tuary 30 miles east of Windhoek, where rescued lions, cheetahs, and wild dogs are rehabilitated (naankuse.com).

GO WILD: Last year, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe signed off on a 170,000-square-mile preserve called the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, which snakes through all five countries. You can enjoy Namibia's section, the Caprivi Strip, now without crowds of tourists: I saw a herd of more than 30 elephants in Mamili National Park and a 20-foot crocodile lazing along the Chobe River. Many lodges are joint ventures with conservancies, so locals get a cut of the profits. For game drives that yield lions, leopards, and elephants, book with Nkasa Lupala (\$180 per person per night; nkasalupalalodge.com), a beautiful solar-tented camp built partially from recycled oil barrels. Fly-fishermen who want easy access to tiger fish on the Zambezi, head to the four-villa N'twala Island Lodge (from \$450 per person per night; islandsinafrica.com).

RECHARGE: Northwestern Namibia's Damaraland is like a desert Galápagos. This vast shale-and-basalt landscape is so massive that, at first glance, it looks empty. Hold up a pair of binoculars, however, and you'll see plains teeming with hartebeests, secretary birds, ostriches, kudus, and zebras. The way to see them: from Wilderness Safaris' Damaraland Camp, with ten luxury tented suites

(from \$683 per person; www.wilderness-safaris.com). The camp sits on a mountain-side with 180-degree views of the Huab River Valley and the Brandberg Mountains. Time it right and watch the full moon rise in the east while the sun sets in the west.

FRESH TRACKS

STEP INTO LIQUID

Morocco became a surfing hot spot in the 1950s, when beach bums flocked in from Europe. But it didn't enter American consciousness until Kelly Slater began frequenting the winter swell a few years ago. The long, consistent surf of Morocco's Atlantic Coast has inspired dozens of surf camps. This month, Access Trips launches an eight-day adventure that mixes in the country's rich culture. Start in Marrakesh, where the open-air market and Jamaa el-Fna, a town square filled with snake charmers and fortune-tellers, make for good people watching. From there it's off to the modern coastal city of Agadir, 150 miles southwest. After three days surfing beginner or expert breaks, head to the 13,000-foot High Atlas Mountains, three hours northeast. Hiking in view of snow-capped peaks and through traditional villages is the perfect precursor to the local tagine and lamb couscous. From \$2,140; accesstrips.com —J.M.