

Sam's Giardino ** - our environment

The Central Coast of Namibia with its intriguing desert scenery and countless awe-inspiring attractions is just as unique as its focal point Swakopmund, a small picturesque seaside-town with a Mediterranean flair, steeped in colonial history.



In the early 1900's, Swakopmund played a vital role as seaport in the establishment of German settlers in what was then called South West Africa but was soon overtaken by Walvis Bay, its neighbouring town development around a natural deep-sea harbour. While Walvis Bay remained a typical harbour town until today, Swakopmund increasingly turned into a holiday resort during the decades that followed for SWA/Namibia under South Africa's rule. Favoured by locals for its combination of moderate climate, beautiful beaches,

numerous sightseeing attractions and sophisticated infrastructure, Swakopmund became *the* place to go for recreation and carefree enjoyment to the younger generations and for the elderly to retire surrounded by many conveniences. When the first foreign tourists arrived in the 1960's and valued Swakopmund not only for the very same qualities but also as a welcome respite from the dust, heat and privations of overland safaris through rough terrains, its fate was sealed. Soon new tourism-related enterprises started developing and flourishing all over town. This development was accelerated by Namibia's Independence in 1990 and an ever-growing number of visitors arriving from Southern African and overseas countries.

Nowadays, Swakopmund features the greatest density of options for sporting, outdoor entertainment, sightseeing and adventure activities along with dining and souvenir shopping facilities found anywhere in Namibia. Even though most parts of the country have also seen countless tourist developments and modern air-conditioned vehicles as well as a well-maintained road system have made touring cross-country far more comfortable, a visit of Swakopmund remains a highlight on every traveller's itinerary.

Some of the greatest attractions in Swakopmund and in its vicinity are:

Historic buildings such as the Woermann House and the Otavi Train Station, the Natural-History Museum with its magnificent collections of colonial relics and Namibian minerals, the Aquarium providing insights into the rich marine life along Namibia's coastline, and the Crystal Gallery displaying unusual finds of minerals and a broad spectrum of gemstones mined in Namibia.

In the Namib Desert, which surrounds Swakopmund in three directions and reaches up to its doorstep with fascinatingly vast gravel plains and a majestic dune belt of apricot-coloured sand, an amazing array of unique creatures and plants can be found, each of them a master in the art of survival in this seemingly hostile environment. The broad Swakop River, the country's longest ephemeral water course, holds many surprises for the visitor too, amongst them the Valley of the Moon, intriguing canyons, camel rides, bird watching and beautiful spots for enjoying romantic sunsets over the Atlantic Ocean.

For those preferring action-adventures and physical activities, there are many kinds of sports options for the individual to choose from including shore and deep-sea fishing, quad bike tours, paragliding, horse-back trails, and kayaking.

The less demanding variety covers walks in solitude on seemingly endless beaches, scenic flights in charter aircraft, and scheduled as well as tailor-made 4x4 excursions with professional guides who know the area intimately and can accommodate special interests.

ENJOY!

