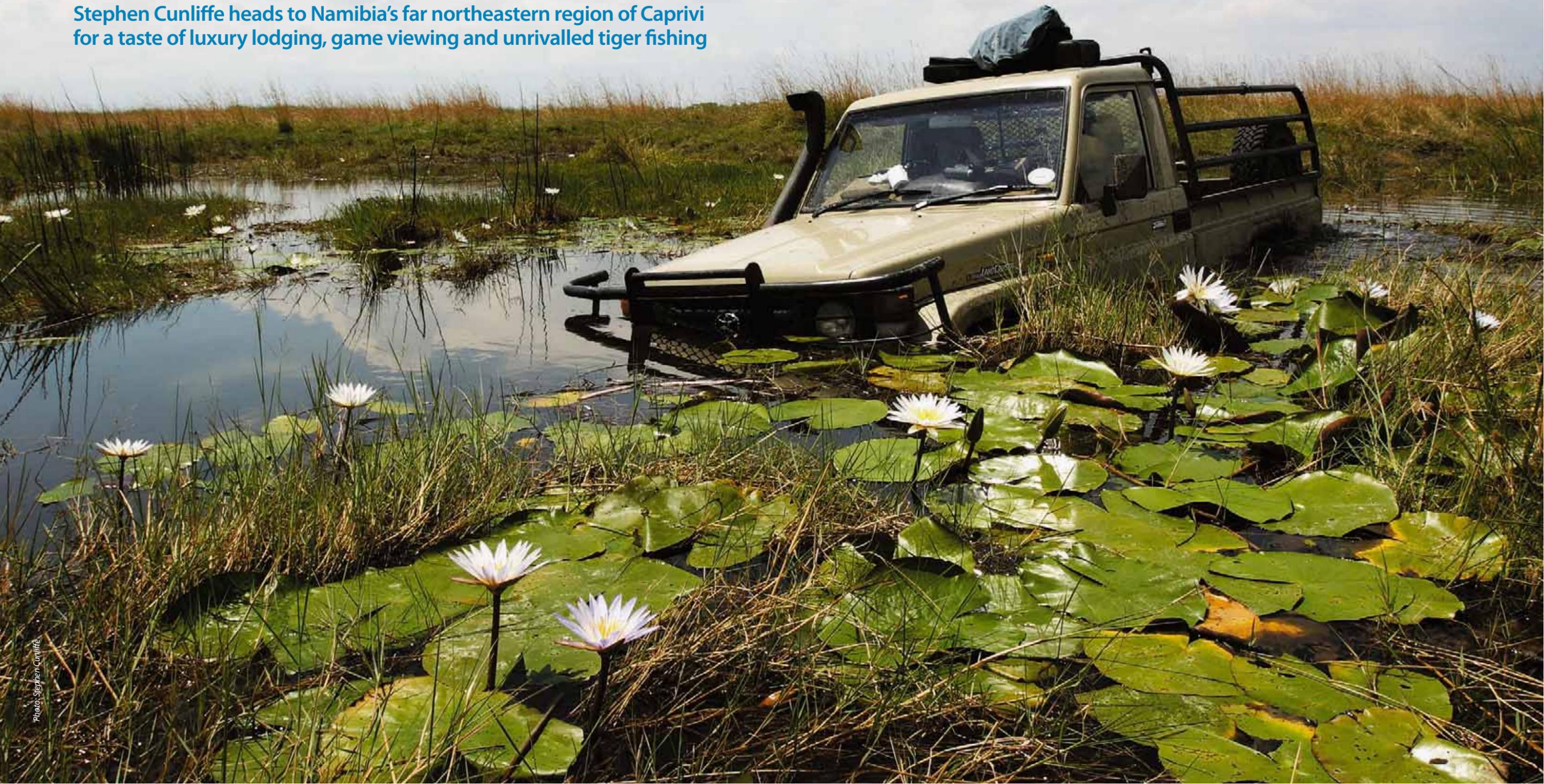


# Namibia's water wonderland

Stephen Cunliffe heads to Namibia's far northeastern region of Caprivi for a taste of luxury lodging, game viewing and unrivalled tiger fishing





**N**amibia is famous for many things, however, lush green wilderness and abundant water are not among them. The watery environments and riverine habitat of the Caprivi are the very antithesis of the stereotypical Namibian desert safari. Rich in rivers, the Caprivi Strip is Namibia's slice of delta-like wetlands. Superb lodges, unspoilt wilderness and rapidly rebounding wildlife mean that the Caprivi parks are deservedly clawing their way back onto the safari map.

While the Germans originally acquired the Caprivi to provide what was then South West Africa with a strategic gateway to the Zambezi for trade, today it has become an entry point for tourists in search of world-class tiger fishing and access to the internationally renowned elephant mecca of Chobe.

However, Namibia's Caprivi Strip offers oodles more than a jumping-off point for a fishing safari on southern Africa's iconic Zambezi River or a launching pad for a Chobe safari in neighbouring Botswana. After all, the Caprivi has three outstanding parks of its own – Mamili, Mudumu and Bwabwata – in addition to two other alluring perennial rivers: the Kavango and Kwando.

So, when I visited the Caprivi for a month, I opted not to play on its fringes, but instead chose to delve into the heart of Namibia's water wonderland.

**Lianshulu Lodge – Mudumu National Park**

My first port of call was the laid-back and luxurious *Lianshulu Lodge*. Set deep inside the 1 010km<sup>2</sup> Mudumu National Park, the camp has an enviable position overlooking the pristine waters of the Kwando River.

If the view were not enough, the amicable staff put me right at ease within minutes of arriving at the waterside location.

I tried to remember names as I met the various members of the *Lianshulu* team, but one of the local characters would not be forgotten easily. When I met Nandi, I had no desire to shake her hand, as she was, in fact, the resident muffin-munching crocodile!

Hand-reared decades earlier, during an era when hand-raising animals was considered acceptable, she developed an inexplicable love for muffins which has endured to this day.

The friendly *Lianshulu* hostess, Nadia, explained, "Nandi is a completely wild crocodile who feeds on fish and antelope, but she never lost her love for muffins or her attachment to the lodge."

Measuring a whopping three metres, she definitely is one of Mudumu's most unusual, not to mention utterly terrifying, attractions.

Crocodiles are merely one of an entire host of animals that can be found along the banks of the Kwando River. Endless swathes of Phragmites reeds line the riverbanks and

constantly filter the river to produce water of an outstanding clarity.

The ultimate highlight on offer within the park is a boat cruise along the mirror-calm waters of this river.

James Kashiri, my *Lianshulu* guide, dramatically enhanced my Mudumu experience by displaying an encyclopaedic knowledge of the park and its inhabitants as we shared some top-quality sightings. From the explosion of colour as a colony of Carmine bee-eaters erupted out of their cliff-side nesting holes as we drifted past, to a dazzle of zebra giving way to a herd of thirsty elephants, our wildlife encounters were quintessential Africa.

However, nothing epitomised the uniqueness of the crystal-clear Kwando more than sitting quietly on the edge of the boat and watching a small pod of hippos, clearly visible down below, as they slept to their content on the river bottom.

**Camping wild in Mamili National Park**

After the comforts of *Lianshulu Lodge*, the thought of roughing it in remote Mamili National Park initially sounded somewhat discomfiting. However, as water slowly seeped under the Land Cruiser door and cooled my feet, I realised that this was what a genuine African adventure was all about!

Our two-vehicle convoy was trying doggedly to forge a route through the swamps and on to Liadura. When the water deep-

ened, we were not deterred; we desperately wanted to be the first vehicles – in over a year – to make it through to Mamili's premier campsite.

Soon water was washing over the bonnet; we pressed on. The tyres started to spin, not because of mud below, but as a result of our buoyant car floating in the ever deepening channel. Water began to pour into the cab through open windows and, bizarrely enough, this helped our desperate plight, as the weight of the water sank the cruiser down and allowed it to find traction once again.

Our approach startled a small flock of pygmy geese and they took off ahead of the advancing vehicles.

With a sigh of relief, we emerged from the depths of the channel to the safety of dry land.

The 357km<sup>2</sup> Mamili National Park (recently renamed the Nkasa/Rupara National Park after the two largest islands) is a spectacular wetland reserve situated in the most southerly kink of the eastern Caprivi.

Mamili is essentially Namibia's answer to the Okavango Delta – a gigantic wetland



Photo: Islands in Africa



Photo: Wilderness Safaris





nestled within an enormous hairpin bend on the perennial Kwando-Linyanti river system.

In stark contrast to Botswana, however, a mere 200 wilderness lovers venture into this water wilderness each year, putting its extreme inaccessibility into perspective.

The abundance of water, limited infrastructure and challenging conditions combine to ensure that only the most dedicated and adventurous safari-goers will make it into and – even more importantly – out of Mamili.

Johan Liebenberg, owner of Camp Kwando and a regular visitor to Mamili, was my guide.

Summing up the beauty and challenges of the park, he said, "The off-road driving conditions can be really tough, but your perseverance is handsomely rewarded with excellent concentrations of game and prolific birdlife.

"Best of all, it's not unusual to find that you have the whole park to yourselves."

I dwelt for more than a moment on his statement, reflecting on just how privileged we had been. After all, where else in southern Africa could we have enjoyed a week exploring our own private, wildlife-rich national park?

Movement on a distant termite mound snapped me out of my reverie. On investigation,



Photo: Stephen Cunliffe

we found a pride of lions resting in the shade of a jackalberry. The cats soon began to yawn, stretch and groom one another before moving off with purpose. They paused periodically to sniff the wind and listen to distant sounds that we were unable to detect. Suddenly they stopped and gazed intently across the open plains where, with the aid of our binoculars, we were thrilled to see that they had led us straight to one of Mamili's fabled buffalo herds.

As hundreds of bovids surged across the wetlands, warthogs and wattled cranes scampered out the way but, like the lions, we sat tight, in awe of one of nature's great spectacles.

Mamili is certainly not for the faint-hearted, but it is for anyone who loves the solitude of a genuine wilderness experience and is not scared of a little mud.

**Susuwe Island Lodge – Bwabwata National Park**

The recently proclaimed Bwabwata National Park is Namibia's newest wildlife sanctuary, protecting a precious chunk of wilderness sandwiched between the Kavango and Kwando rivers. Moulded from an amalgamation of the old West Caprivi Game Park and



**Island View Lodge**  
Upper Zambezi River - Namibia

**Gateway to 140 Km's of magnificent Upper Zambezi River - Namibia.**

Island View Lodge is situated in a sheltered backwater of the main Zambezi overlooking Kalimbeza Island, the perfect place to capture the true spirit of the Caprivi with its natural unspoilt beauty, spectacular riverine scenery, vast floodplains, magnificent sunsets and abundant bird and wildlife which abound in this natural wetland paradise. Island View Lodge is conveniently located in close proximity to the Chobe National Park in Botswana, Livingstone in Zambia, and Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe thus enabling visitors a unique opportunity to experience the awe inspiring splendour of the falls and the multitude of wildlife that abounds in the region. Besides being renowned for the incredible sport fishing opportunities available to anglers from all over the world the Caprivi region incorporates some of the most spectacular wildlife reserves and conservation areas in Namibia. Island View Lodge is the ideal location, with its friendly relaxed atmosphere, attentive hosts, comfortable accommodation and natural beauty from which to explore this African wonderland.

*A true Zambezi experience*

P.O. Box 2025 - Ngweze - Namibia • Tel: +264 (0) 66 252801 • Fax: +264 (0) 66 252573  
Email: tiger@islandvl.com • Hosts: Riaan & Marisa, Niel & Michelle

**Kaisosi River Lodge**  
Rundu • Namibia

Located just 7km outside of Rundu, Kaisosi River Lodge lies nestled on the banks of the Kavango River. We offer 16 spacious rooms looking out over the river and 16 campsites with grass, shady trees and ablution facilities. We provide river activities in the form of champagne breakfasts, sunset cruises, fishing and a cruise along the river. A delicious breakfast is included in the cost of your stay and we also offer à la carte lunch and dinner dining.

*Come and rejuvenate at Kaisosi on the Kavango!*

Tel: +264 66 686 012 • Fax: +264 66 686 014  
Email: kaisosi@rway.na  
Website: www.kaisosiriverlodge.com

**A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF WILDLIFE, NATURE AND WELLNESS IN A PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

Situated a mere 29 kilometres south east from Windhoek on a hilltop overlooking a spectacular landscape, **GOCHEGANAS** is a luxurious lodge offering a unique combination of Wildlife, Nature and Wellness experiences.

With 25 different wildlife species located on a 6000 hectare Nature Reserve, game drives & walking activities are welcomed as an enriching experience. Wellness facilities and treatments of a world class standard ensure a renewal of mind, body and spirit.

**GOCHEGANAS**  
*the experience*

PO Box 40770, Windhoek, Namibia, Tel: +264 61 224909, Fax: +264 61 224924  
Reservations: reservations@gocheganas.com - info@gocheganas.com - www.gocheganas.com



Mahango National Park, it forms the Caprivi's largest conservation area.

I chose to base myself at the ultra-luxurious *Susuwe Island Lodge*, from where I could explore the less visited Kwando Core Area in the east of the park. The lodge comprises only six thatched suites, each with its own wooden deck and private plunge pool overlooking the braided channels of the Kwando: the haunt of honeymooners and birders alike.

As we stood enjoying a timely sundowner on the edge of a large perennial oxbow known as Horseshoe Bend, Bevan Kanzeka, my experienced Susuwe guide, advised: "Horseshoe is one of the most productive wildlife-viewing areas in the whole of Bwabwata, especially in October when the extreme heat concentrates all the animals on the last remaining water points."

As we sipped ice-cold Tafel Lagers and watched the sun slip below the horizon, we shared Bwabwata's most famous watering hole with impala, kudu, hippos and the rising full moon.

"Last month, I was right here enjoying a drink and chatting to my guests," Bevan continued, "when suddenly all the impala at the water's edge started snorting and running straight past us."

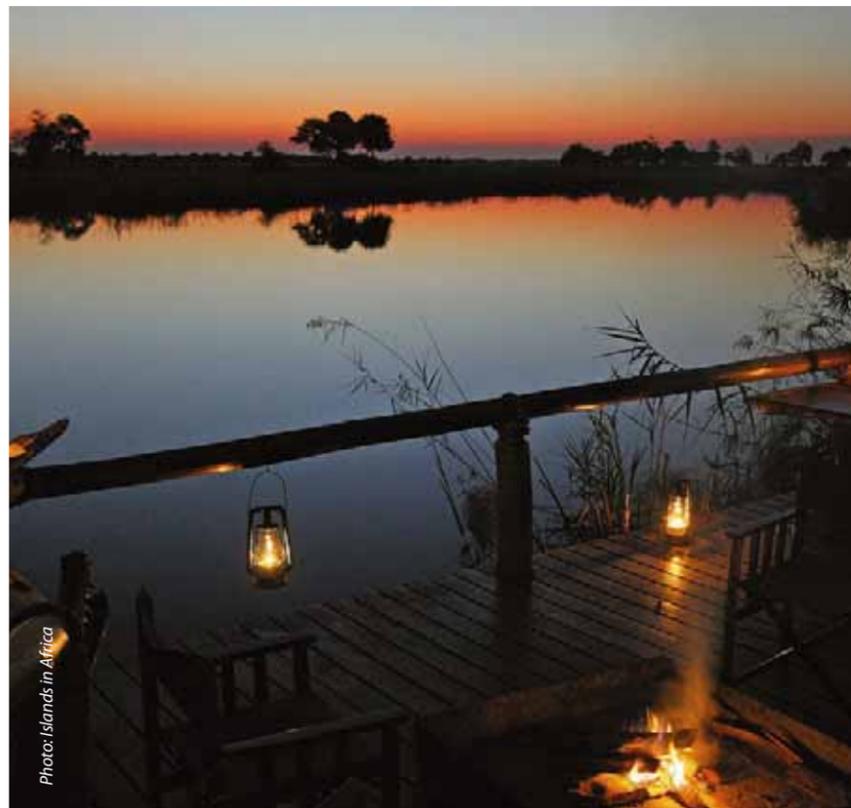


Photo: Islands in Africa



Photo: Stephen Cunliffe

"I quickly bundled everyone back into the vehicle, in the nick of time, as seven very inquisitive wild dogs emerged from the woodlands. They sniffed around our sundowner spot, drank from Horseshoe and then took off in search of dinner," he related.

During the Namibian liberation struggle, the Bwabwata region became a restricted security zone and the exclusive domain of the former South African Defence Force (SADF).

The park is littered with the remnants of its occupation and our game drives regularly passed by discarded military equipment and overgrown shooting ranges: all harsh reminders of a torrid time in the park's history.

The derelict remains of Fort Doppies, now an excellent place to watch the sunrise, sits on a cliff top. When the sun breaches the horizon, it illuminates the meandering Kwando River down below, and the wind carries the sound of grunting hippos from neighbouring Pelican Pan.

As you sit there drinking in the scene, there is no denying that nature is slowly but steadily reclaiming her realm.

**The Caprivi awaits you**  
Up until 2002, tourists rarely ventured into

### NHOMA SAFARI CAMP

Nhoma Safari Camp, Namibia - Staying in the tented camp adjacent to the Ju/'hoan village of N//hoq'ma, allows the most authentic and interactive San/Bushman cultural experience possible. An afternoon of fun traditional games is followed by a healing dance: for spirit and body. The next day/days are spent learning how to live off the land. Tours to Khaudum National Park are also operated from the camp.



Cell: +264 812734606 • Email: tsumkwel@iway.na  
Web: www.tsumkwel.iway.na  
N//hoq'ma village, Tsumkwe Constituency West, Otjozondupa, Namibia



When planning your holiday in Namibia, choosing the right car from the right people is probably the most important decision to make to ensure a unforgettable vacation in this, the Land of Contrasts.

**Choose Advanced Car Hire for professional advice and friendly service!**



Tel: (+264 61) 24 6832  
Fax: (+264 61) 24 6816  
Cell: (+264 81) 124 2008 / 287 6932  
E-mail: info@advancedcarhire.com  
[www.advancedcarhire.com](http://www.advancedcarhire.com)



*A great African getaway for all*

Have a truly African bush experience at this laid back Zambezi birding paradise & great family getaway, with boats and fishing. Get married in a traditional African wedding, breakfast on a sandbank in the river and generally enjoy the Zambezi experience.

Kalizo Lodge offers the option of self catering Units, Dinner Bed and breakfast, or camping. We also cater for conferences, weddings, workshops, corporate functions.

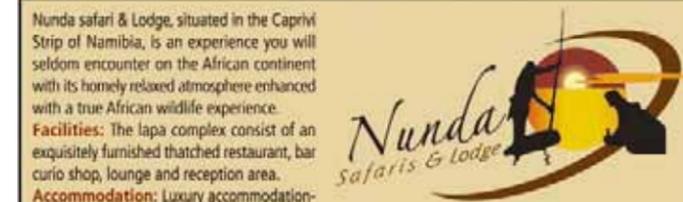
We do shuttle services to Chobe National Park, Victoria Falls and Livingston so that while visiting the Caprivi you can experience Chobe & Victoria Falls.

**New!!**

Spend a few days rivering along on the Sir Osis Of The River, our new pontoon boat, complete with bar and ablution facilities. Sleep overnight in specially provided tents on a sandbank.

**For the latest tips on tourism e-mail the Kalizo Team Contact us to find out more about it.**

Contact us:  
Upper Zambezi River • Katima Mulilo • Caprivi • Namibia  
Email: kalizo@mighty.co.za or bruno@iway.na  
www.kalizolodge.com • Tel: +264 (0) 66 686802/3  
Fax: +264 (0) 66 686804



Nunda safari & Lodge, situated in the Caprivi Strip of Namibia, is an experience you will seldom encounter on the African continent with its homely relaxed atmosphere enhanced with a true African wildlife experience.

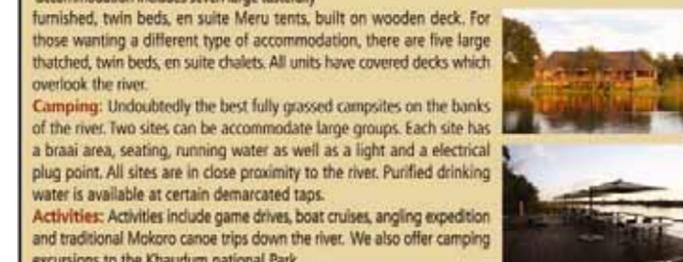
**Facilities:** The lapa complex consist of an exquisitely furnished thatched restaurant, bar curio shop, lounge and reception area.

**Accommodation:** Luxury accommodation- accommodation includes seven large tastefully furnished, twin beds, en suite Meru tents, built on wooden deck. For those wanting a different type of accommodation, there are five large thatched, twin beds, en suite chalets. All units have covered decks which overlook the river.

**Camping:** Undoubtedly the best fully grassed campsites on the banks of the river. Two sites can be accommodate large groups. Each site has a braai area, seating, running water as well as a light and an electrical plug point. All sites are in close proximity to the river. Purified drinking water is available at certain demarcated taps.

**Activities:** Activities include game drives, boat cruises, angling expedition and traditional Mokoro canoe trips down the river. We also offer camping excursions to the Khaudum national Park.

*We look forward to seeing you!*



Tel: + 264 66 686070 • Fax: +264 66 686 071 • Fax/email: 088 610 233 • Cell: +264 81 310 1730  
Email: booking@nundaonline.com • www.nundaonline.com  
Postal Address: PO Box 5271, Divundu, Kavango Region, Namibia  
Airstrip: GPS: S 18 degrees 07.0 • E 21 degrees 37.5  
Lodge: GPS: S18 07.032 E21 35.905

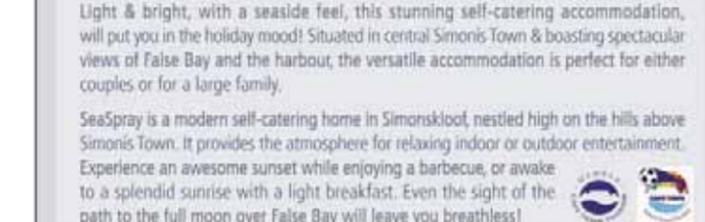


**SeaSpray self-catering accommodation in Simonstown**



Light & bright, with a seaside feel, this stunning self-catering accommodation, will put you in the holiday mood! Situated in central Simonis Town & boasting spectacular views of False Bay and the harbour, the versatile accommodation is perfect for either couples or for a large family.

SeaSpray is a modern self-catering home in Simonskloof, nestled high on the hills above Simonis Town. It provides the atmosphere for relaxing indoor or outdoor entertainment. Experience an awesome sunset while enjoying a barbecue, or awake to a splendid sunrise with a light breakfast. Even the sight of the path to the full moon over False Bay will leave you breathless!



Contact Chris: + 27 [0] 83 292 5313 • Tel: +27 [0] 21 786 5922  
Email: seasprayaccom@tiscali.co.za • www.seasprayaccom.co.za



the Caprivi, relying on convoys for safety when they did. In the last eight years, the region finally has shrugged off decades of war and begun to embrace tourism, opening up to adventurous souls looking for a slice of pristine uncrowded wilderness.

With word of the Caprivi's superb game viewing, birding and fishing spreading faster than an African bushfire, it will not be too long before the Caprivi wedges itself firmly back into the Namibian safari circuit.

The establishment of lavish new lodges, such as *Susuwe* and *Lianshulu*, means that the Caprivi now has the accommodation options to cater to wilderness seekers of every pocket.

Do not delay your visit because Namibia's water wilderness is emerging rapidly from obscurity.

**Contacts**

*Accommodation:*

Camp Kwando ([www.campkwando.com](http://www.campkwando.com)), an attractive Kwando River site on the outskirts of Mudumu, offers a range of accommodation options to suit all tastes and budgets.

Lianshulu Lodge ([www.safariadventurecompany.com](http://www.safariadventurecompany.com)) has a unique location in the heart of Mudumu National Park and offers comfortable riverfront chalets.

Nambwa Community Campsite ([www.nacobta.com.na](http://www.nacobta.com.na)) has six picturesque sites on a Kwando River backwater in the midst of Bwabwata National Park.

Susuwe Island Lodge ([www.islandsinafrica.com](http://www.islandsinafrica.com)) is undeniably the Caprivi's most luxurious accommodation option with only six secluded chalets set on a Kwando River island within Bwabwata.

*Tour Operators:*

Camp Kwando ([www.campkwando.com](http://www.campkwando.com)), under the ownership and guidance of Johan Liebenberg, caters for local and international clientele with an array of itineraries and catering options on its Mudumu and Mamili camping safaris.

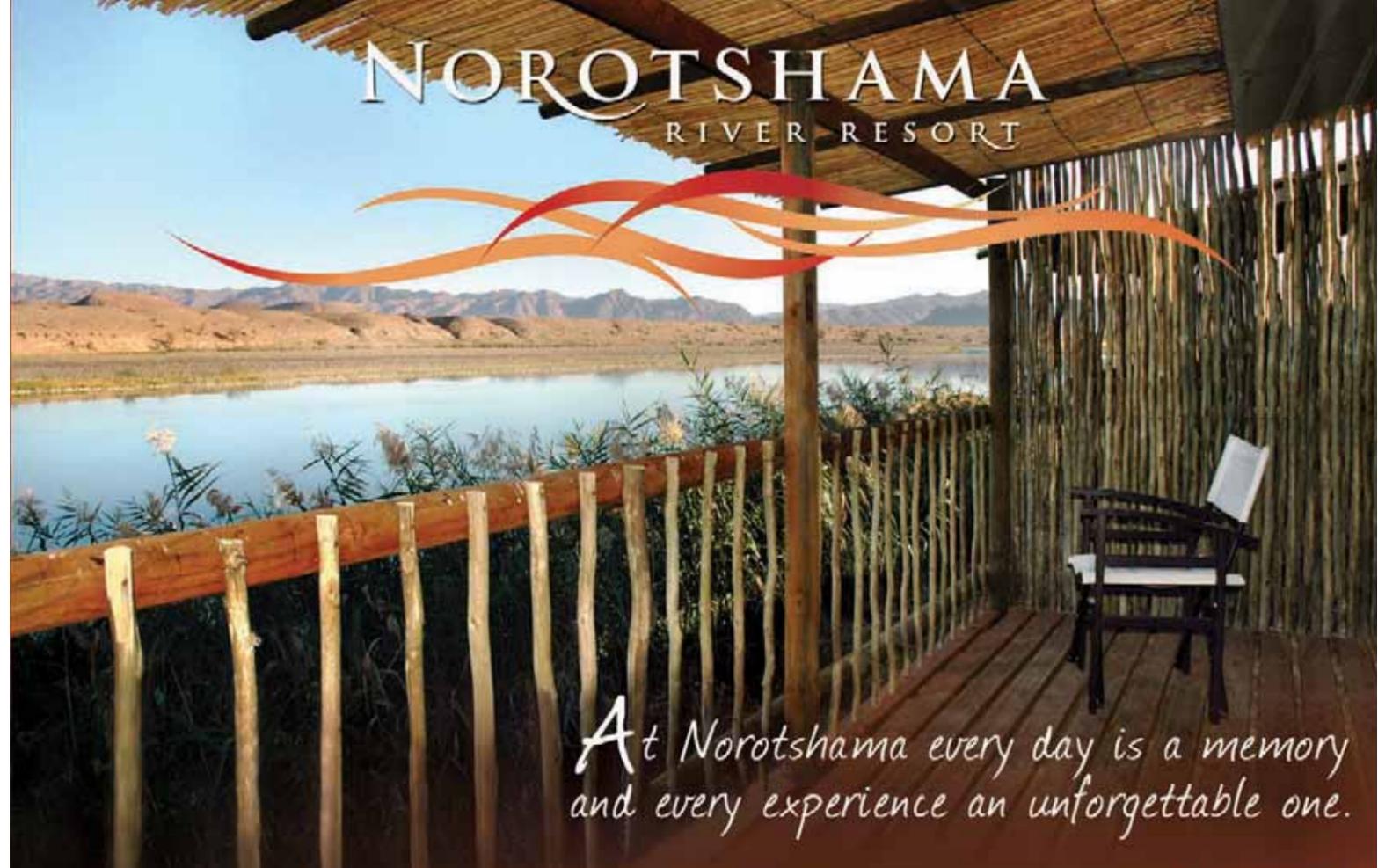
Hakuna Matata Adventures ([www.capriviriverlodge.com](http://www.capriviriverlodge.com)), run by Keith Rooker-Smith, offers fully inclusive camping safaris to all the Caprivi parks, with emphasis on Mamili.

Tutwa Tourism & Travel ([www.tutwa.com](http://www.tutwa.com)) owned by Dick and Katy Sharpe, offers an assorted array of safari options throughout the Caprivi.



Photo: Islands in Africa

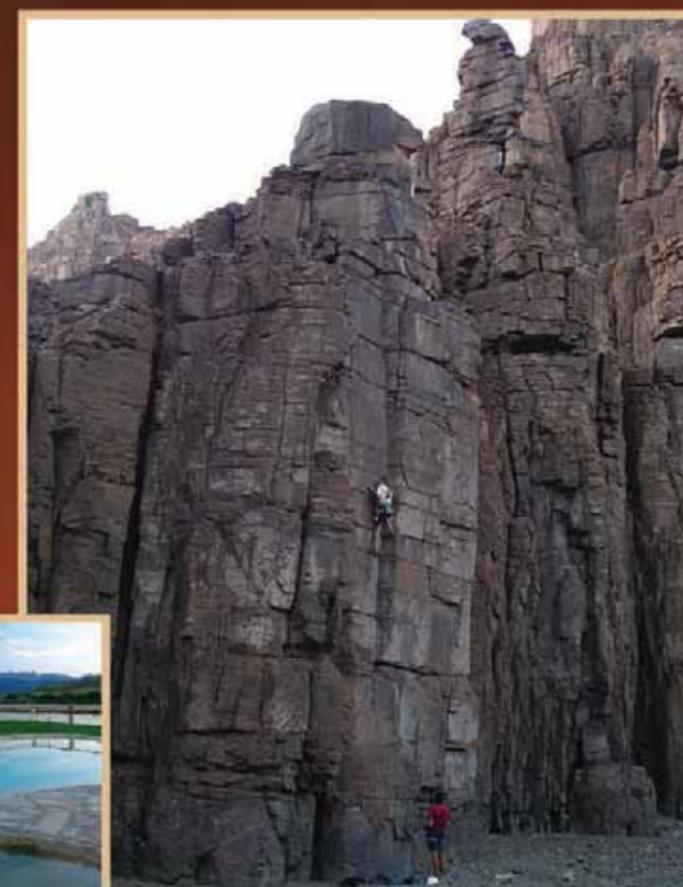
# NOROTSHAMA RIVER RESORT



*At Norotshama every day is a memory and every experience an unforgettable one.*

Situated on the banks of the Orange River and nestled in the heart of the Aussenkehr Grape Valley lies Norotshama River Resort, a gateway to the scenic beauty of Southern Namibia. Our guests can enjoy traditional Southern Namibian hospitality and luxury accommodation.

We offer a host of activities which includes excursions to the local canyons and cultural community, fishing and fly fishing, bird watching and fabulous hiking, mountain biking and 4x4 trails. For the adventurous of heart there is the thrill of river rafting and sport rock climbing of various grades.



For more information, contact us: Tel: +264 63-297-215 or +264 63 811286247 • Fax: +264 63-297-217  
E-mail: [norotshama@africaonline.com.na](mailto:norotshama@africaonline.com.na) • Website: [www.norotshamaresort.com](http://www.norotshamaresort.com)