



Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

The most important CAMERA EQUIPMENT
to take to Africa for wildlife & landscape photography

by Claudia & Wynand du Plessis



Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

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WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT HERE:

If you are passionate about wildlife and landscape photography, and are planning a trip to Namibia or another African country, you want to make sure to take important & essential camera equipment with you. Most African wilderness destinations have no camera shops close-by to purchase equipment you've forgotten at home!



Elephant herd running to Okaukuejo waterhole, Etosha

The photographer's pack list and the short descriptions provided here give an overview of what is generally required for wildlife and landscape photography on a trip to Africa, with specific reference to Namibia.

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia



Photographer's Pack List - OVERVIEW:

1. The right camera & lens specifications
2. Lenses for landscape & wildlife photography
3. Camera bag for all equipment
4. Camera day-backpack
5. Memory cards (CF &/or SD cards)
6. Batteries and charger for all equipment
7. USB & charger cables
8. Power adapters for Namibia
9. Camera cleaning stuff
10. Laptop computer to download and view photos or External hard drives with card reader
11. Clear UV protection filters on each lens
12. Neutral Density filter and Graduated Neutral Density filter
13. External Flash
14. Remote control shutter release
15. Intervalometer used for time lapse photography

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

- 16. Bean bag
- 17. Tripod & ball-head system with quick release plates
- 18. Binoculars
- 19. Small torch



Giraffe herd at sunset, Etosha

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1a. D-SLR camera or top quality digital mirrorless camera:

A full-frame camera (D-SLR or digital mirrorless camera) is generally better for **landscape photography**, and a cropped frame camera (D-SLR or mirrorless) is generally better suited for **wildlife photography**. If you can, take two camera bodies with you, one specifically for landscapes, and another specifically for wildlife.



Shadows over the plains of the Namib Desert

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1b. Pros & cons of full-frame vs. cropped frame sensors:

Full-frame cameras have sensors that are 36mm x 24mm in physical size. Cropped frame sensors are at least 2.5 times smaller (APS-C and DX type sensors), but compact cameras have sensors that are more than 8 times smaller than full-frame sensors.

Cameras with full-frame sensors usually produce better image quality with less noise, and show more sensitivity to details in darker areas than cropped frame sensors, especially during low light and at high ISO settings. They are best for **landscape photography**.



Giraffe walking in front of the Etosha Pan

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

Cameras with cropped frame sensors have a narrower field of view for the same lens when compared with a camera with a full-frame sensor, therefore you get more telephoto effect for the same lens.

A 400mm lens on a full-frame camera stays a 400mm lens, but a 400mm lens on a cropped frame camera (APS-C or DX type sensor) becomes a 600mm lens or longer. Modern cropped frame cameras are best for [wildlife photography](#) but have slight disadvantage for [landscape photography](#).



Southern Pied Babbler at Erindi Ranch

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1c. Image quality & performance of cameras & lenses:

For landscape photography:

Image quality is often the most important consideration for **landscape photography**. You will get the best image quality with full-frame cameras (the top of the range cropped frame camera also have outstanding image quality, but full-frame cameras have even better quality in extreme light situations).



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Gemsbok antelope near Sossusvlei

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

The optical quality of a camera lens has a large influence on the overall image quality of the photo. Therefore consider that the top-of-the-range lenses have meaningfully better quality than cheap lenses.



Aerial view of the Skeleton Coast south of Walvis Bay

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

For wildlife photography:

Performance is often the most important consideration for [wildlife photography](#).

Use cameras with very fast reaction times that have no noticeable shutter lag and that have capture speeds of at least 10 frames per second (the top of the range cropped frame cameras often have faster capture speeds than very good full-frame cameras).



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Lion charging in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

Telephoto lenses with a large aperture let in the most light. This is very important during low light situations and where a very fast shutter speed is required during fast [wildlife action photography](#).

The best optical quality telephoto lenses often also have the largest maximum aperture, but are therefore mostly rather expensive.

For [wildlife photography](#) it is important to have very fast and accurate autofocus. "Laggy" autofocus is often the reason why the best moments are being missed.



Blue wildebeest at a dusty sunset in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1d. Sensor resolution & sensor size related to image quality:

A camera with a high sensor resolution of at least 20MP or higher is necessary to capture fine image details.

A full-frame camera with for example 24MP has a much larger sensor than a cropped frame camera with 24MP, and therefore the individual pixel area size is larger in a full-frame camera. The larger individual pixels result in less digital noise, and therefore the image quality of the larger sensor is better than the smaller sensor with the same amount of pixels (this is in general a more important consideration for **landscape photography** than for **wildlife photography**).



Elim dune and the Naukluft mountains

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1e. ISO range & image quality:

The ISO controls the sensitivity of your camera's sensor to a given amount of light. By increasing the ISO you increase the sensitivity to light, but also the 'noise' level (colour & brightness errors).

A camera that still produces high image quality at ISO 6400 with little noise is very desirable. Full-frame cameras produce

better image quality at higher ISO settings (ISO 3200 to 6400) than cropped frame cameras, especially in low light and high contrast situations.



Black rhino drinking at night in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

However, for the average passionate nature photographer the image quality of the top-of-the-range cropped frame cameras are mostly more than good enough, also at higher ISO settings.



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Sunrise over the Naukluft mountains

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

1f. Image stabilization / vibration reduction for sharp photos:

The traditional rule of thumb for capturing sharp, handheld imagery without image stabilization recommends that you shouldn't handheld a camera at shutter speeds slower than the equivalent focal length of the lens. This means a 400mm lens shouldn't be handheld at speeds slower than 1/400-second exposure, a 200mm lens not slower than 1/200-second exposure, etc.



Elephant bull trio in Etosha

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

However, if you consider getting new equipment, it's important that your camera and/or your lens incorporate stabilization.

Nowadays, image stabilization allows 2 to 5 stops advantages over when hand-holding your camera & lens, meaning you may still be able to get sharp shots with a 500mm lens at shutter speeds of 5 stops lower, therefore at a 1/30th of a second (if your subject stays still).



Springbok & gemsbok near a waterhole at sunset

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

1. The right camera & lens specifications:

Lens-based stabilization is usually better when using long telephoto lenses, but camera systems that offer sensor-shift stabilization are often smaller & cheaper.

Some new mirrorless camera systems offer image stabilization in-camera as well as on their lenses, resulting in amazing stabilization not rivalled by any D-SLR full-frame camera system.



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Rainy season sunset in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

2. Lenses for **landscape** & **wildlife** photography:

When we talk about the focal length of lenses we relate it to the field of view of full-frame digital cameras (for cameras with cropped frame APS-C / DX sensors the same lens will result in an image magnification of at least 1,5 times larger than when using a full-frame camera).

This has advantages for **wildlife photography**, but disadvantages for **landscape photography** (you would need a wider lens than usual to get a wide enough view for grand landscapes when using a cropped frame camera).



Sociale-weaver's nest & Naukluft mountains at sunset

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

2. Lenses for landscape & wildlife photography:

2a. Lenses for **landscape photography**:

- Wide-angle e.g. 16mm to 35mm
- A 24mm or wider lens is often better for grand landscapes
- Telephoto lense of 70-200mm: for tighter landscape shots & abstracts
- Sometimes even a longer telephoto lens of 200-500mm may be needed for far away scenes or to isolate a small part of a landscape.



Ripples in sand near Sossusvlei

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

2. Lenses for landscape & wildlife photography:

2b. Lenses for **wildlife photography**:

- Long telephoto zoom lens of about 100-400mm focal length gives you great creative composing possibilities
- Or use a lens with at least 300 mm focal length with wide aperture (fast lens) as animals are often keeping their distance
- A very long telephoto lens of 600mm or longer may often be needed too (or alternatively use your 300mm lens with a 2x converter)
- At waterholes with large herds of elephants or antelopes a standard telephoto and even a wide angle lens should also be kept ready



Elephant calf silhouette at sunset in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

3. Camera bag for all equipment:

Select a large enough & sturdy, but light-weight bag to fit all your cameras, lenses, batteries & memory cards. You should ideally carry this as carry-on baggage when flying (in case your baggage gets lost...), so it cannot be too heavy or too large.



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Fascinating dunes at Sossusvlei

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4. Camera day-backpack:

Take an additional smaller empty backpack with you to use as a day backpack to hold the essential equipment that you need on a short hike or in the car next to you. Choose a day-pack where you can zip open the pack and see all your equipment inside with one glance for easy access.

The large camera bag should also be in the car on a drive, e.g. on the back seat, and not left behind at your accommodation!



Lions sleeping at midday in Etosha

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5. Memory cards (CF or SD cards):

Get the fastest memory card you can afford and that your camera supports.

Take at least 3 fast cards of 32 to 64GB capacity each with (rather than just one large card). Download and format every night to be ready for the next day. CF cards are usually faster than SD cards, but most cameras only support one type.



Glowing dunes of Sossusvlei at sunset

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

6. Batteries and charger:

Take 3 rechargeable batteries per camera with, and don't forget the charger! Recharge every night.

7. USB & charger cables:

Do not forget all the download charger cables needed for all types of equipment.



Close-up of a zebra foal surrounded by the herd

8. Power adapter for Namibia:

Bring a power adapter with to be able to use the power supply outlets in Namibia, or buy it in Windhoek.

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

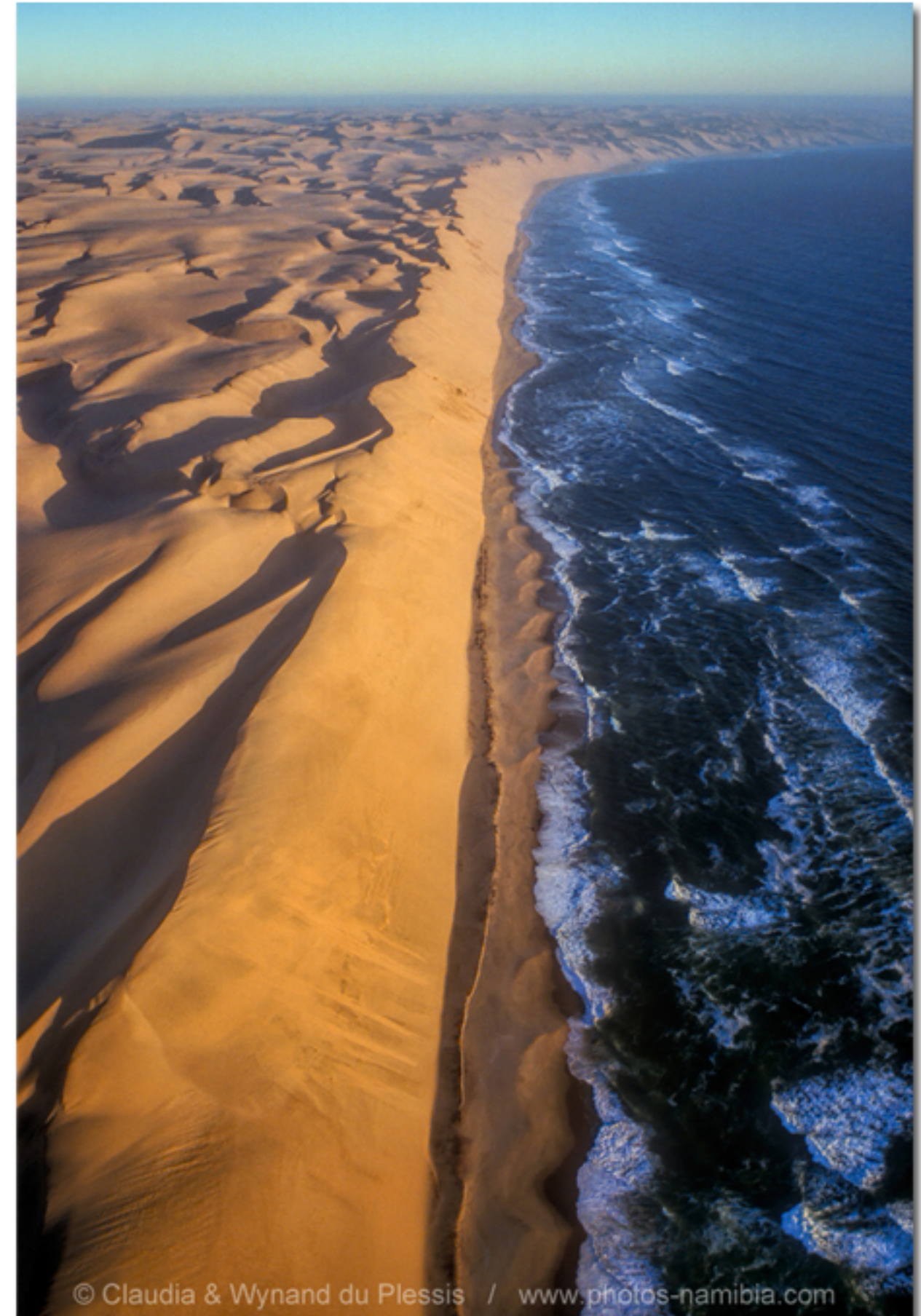
Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

9. Camera cleaning stuff:

Namibia is a dusty country & dust on your equipment may cause a lens to be scratched or a sensor to fail.

Recommended:

- Blow-brush to blow off dust
- Use lens cleaning wipes only for sticky dirt on lens: be careful to first remove all dust with a brush before using wipes
- Brush/clean when necessary in closed area with little dust (room/tent/car)



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Aerial view of the Skeleton coast

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10. Laptop computer to download and view photos / External hard drives with card reader:

Serious wildlife & landscape photographers in great locations can generate more than 1000 photos (in raw mode) per day. Unless you plan to bring 2-3 memory cards PER DAY to Namibia (a very expensive choice), you need to be able to download your photos and clear out the cards on a daily basis.

Download the photos onto a laptop computer, then delete the ones that are obviously unsharp or of poor quality. Additionally make a back-up onto an external hard disk.



Elephant baby with herd in Etosha

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If you do not want to take a laptop computer with, there are now external hard disks on the market with built-in SD or CF card readers. They have the advantage of being much smaller than a laptop.

However, the disadvantages are that they are nearly as expensive as a laptop, that you will likely only use them when on remote photo trips, and that you will only be able to review your photos when you're back home.



Quiver trees in southern Namibia

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

11. Clear UV protection filters on each lens

A clear UV filter is very important to protect the valuable front element of your camera lens against scratches, and should be left on permanently. Rather choose a better quality UV filter than a cheap one.



"Gentle giants" in Etosha

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

12. Neutral Density (ND) filter and Graduated Neutral Density filter for landscape photography

An ND filter is a filter with a uniform coating over the entire filter that does not influence the colour, just reduces the brightness. This is useful for getting slow enough shutter speeds for longer exposures e.g. when you want to blur movement and still expose your photo correctly.



"Wild desert" near Sossusvlei

A Graduated ND filter is a filter with one half coated neutrally to reduce brightness and the other half being clear to let in as much light as possible. This filter is most often used for scenes with bright sky and dark foregrounds to reduce the level of contrast and brightness in the scene for better exposures.

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

13. External Flash:

Bring an external flash with. It is also great and very practical to have a built-in flash, but it is more important for serious [wildlife photography](#) to be able to have a powerful external flash available for night photography at a waterhole, or to use as a fill-in light for birds or wildlife that are in the shade of a tree.

Don't forget the rechargeable batteries, charger and charger cable for your external flash!



Cape fox pup at its den in Etosha

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

14. Remote control shutter release:

For **landscape photography** during very low light, it is better to rest your camera and lens on a sturdy tripod. To ensure the sharpest shots during very long exposures, trigger the shutter release electronically with a remote device to prevent camera shake. Alternatively, use the self-timer function of your camera.



Zebras grazing on the Etosha plains in the rainy season

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

15. Intervalometer used for time-lapse photography:

Time-lapse photography is the method of taking numerous consecutive photos of a specific scene at fixed intervals (often at 1 second intervals). Great opportunities for time lapse photography would be at sunrise or sunset at a grand location to show the dramatic light changes during this time of day. The series of photographs are then turned into a video, which is a wonderful way to liven up your presentation, website or blog.



Deadvlei at sunrise

Your camera should be on a tripod, and you need an intervalometer to control the shutter release at regular intervals. It's great if your camera already incorporates this function. A stand-alone intervalometer is not cheap and it's another piece of equipment to carry around.

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Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

16. Bean bag:

When taking wildlife photos from a vehicle in Etosha for example (and in most other wildlife areas in Africa), an alternative to a tripod is using a large bean bag that drapes over the open window. Animals often just stand a few seconds in an attractive pose before they turn away or move off. When anticipating an animal's behaviour in advance, the camera and large lens can quickly be rested on the bean bag, so that when the vehicle stops you are ready to start shooting.



Elephant babies playing

The bean bag cover can be of any flexible material, ideally cotton like a pillow case. We usually fill the bags with hard beans, lentils or even rice. Bring an empty bag with you and buy the fillings in Namibia.

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

17. Tripod:

For **landscape photography** a sturdy but light-weight carbon fibre tripod with a ball-head system and quick-release plates are important for obtaining sharp images when shooting in low light with slow shutter speeds. In such situations the camera's image stabilization cannot counter handheld shaking anymore (shutter speeds under 1/30th of a second depending on lens used).



Gemsbok herd "dwarfed by the Namib desert"

A tripod is also necessary for doing time-lapse photography or for very long exposures, where for example water or star movement is blurred, but the rest of the image stays sharp.

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

For [wildlife action photography](#) on foot with a heavy full-frame camera and large lense in low light, a tripod is necessary to prevent handheld-induced blur when taking photos. It also helps counter fatigue when holding the equipment for a long time.

However, tripods are tedious to use, and it may slow you down when you have to move and change your position to get a better view.

The good news is that modern camera systems are already extremely effective in their image stabilization, and in many situation photos can easily be taken without a tripod and still be extremely sharp.



"Ghost walkers" - elephant herd at sunset in Etosha

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

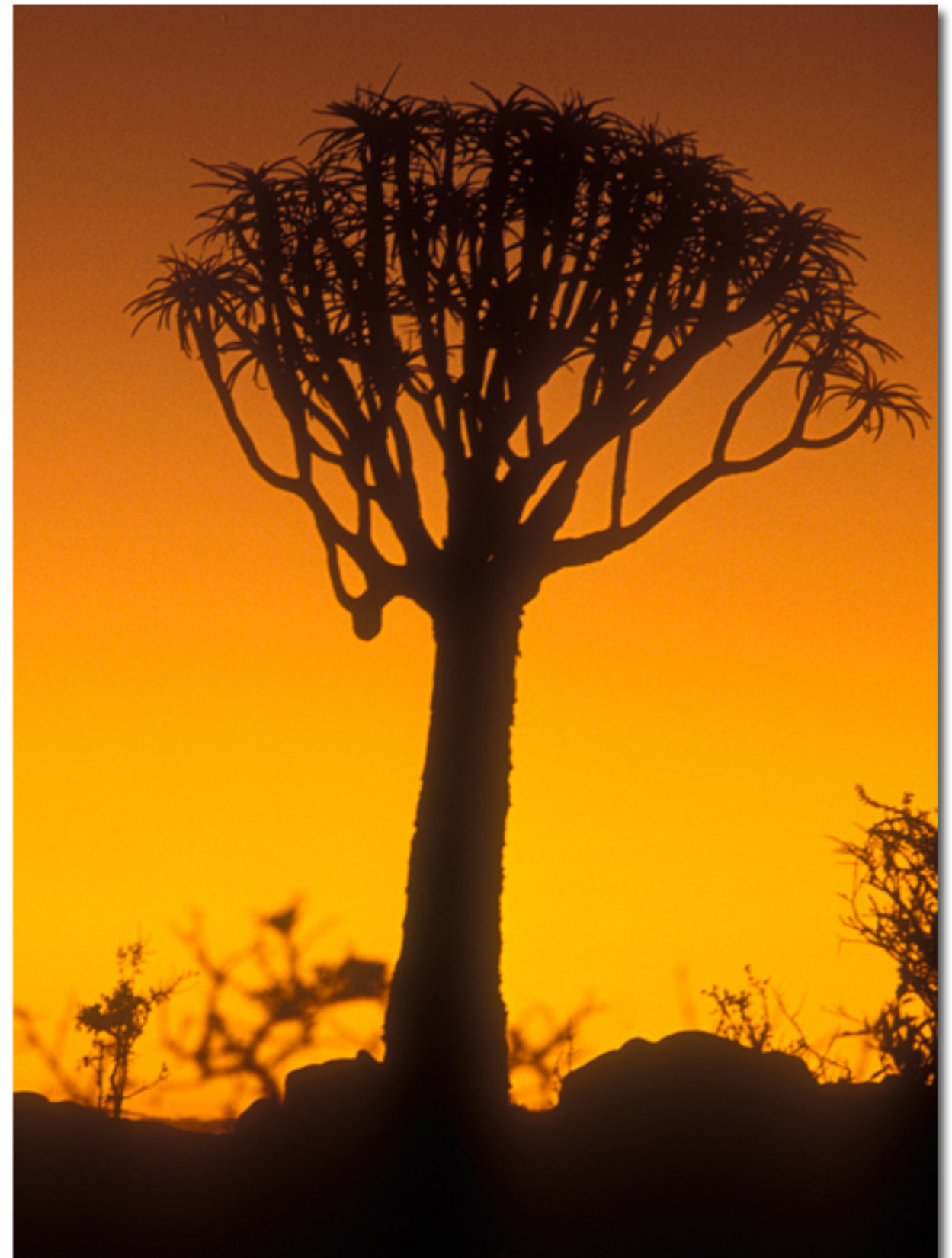
Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

18. Binoculars:

Binoculars are very useful for searching for wildlife and birds, and for identifying situations where it may be worthwhile to wait longer for interesting things to happen.

Recommended:

- Take binoculars with on all game drives and photo hiking trips to identify and spot animals in the distance or hiding under bushes
- It is very important to bring good quality binoculars, as poor quality devices will strain and weaken your eyes
- 10x50 binoculars are very well suited for spotting and identifying wildlife and birds



Quiver tree silhouette

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

Photographer's Pack List - DESCRIPTIONS:

19. Small torch:

Always have a small LED torch in your camera bag if you plan to do night sky photography or photographing animals at floodlit waterholes in Etosha for example. It will help you to quickly find something you are looking for in your camera bag in the dark.



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Cheetah on the hunt in Etosha

Photographer's Pack List for Namibia

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

If this PACK LIST just got you started and you're wondering now:

- whether your camera equipment is up to scratch for your specific photographic needs?
- which new photo gear is right for YOU?

Then check out more details at:

<https://www.photos-namibia.com/camera-equipment>