

Weekend at Tsauchab River Camp

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The only time that the Tsauchab River has any water in it is after exceptionally heavy rains, and in the Naukluft region of Namibia that is very rarely. The “river” is approximately 100 km long and is best known for the spectacular Sesriem Canyon, which it has carved through the sedimentary rock over the millennia, and for the usually dry lake called Sossusvlei, in the very heart of the Namib Desert. Sossusvlei marks the end of the Tsauchab River’s abortive attempt to reach the Atlantic, for here it is blocked by some of the biggest sand dunes in the world.

It is on the banks of this ephemeral river that the Tsauchab River Camp is situated.



Approaching the campsite - dry, barren and not very inviting

The driveway to the reception area of the Tsauchab River Camp is decorated on both sides with metal animals and the like, assembled from oddments from cars, tractors and who-knows-what-else, welded together. Some of the assemblages are easily recognized, some are a mystery to all but the creator. Yes...But is it art? Hmm.

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? Common ostriches



? Kudu



? Springbok



? Owl

Whatever your view of the scrap-metal creations, don't let them put you off. The campsites are

magnificent! I think that they must rank as the most spacious campsites in all of Namibia – the campsite that we stayed in had no fewer than three separate areas in which we could camp, and no fewer than three separate toilets. Some of the toilets are not strong on privacy, which is not terribly important in view of the isolation of the campsite.



There are a few gaps in the toilet walls...



...and sometimes there aren't enough walls!



Clear instructions for using the toilet!

And some allow limited activity. I assume that it was a courtesy to the ladies that this was shaped and positioned like an ordinary toilet and not like the urinals that usually populate gentlemen's facilities.

The main ablutions, though, is built between the multiple trunks of an enormous ficus and is of the highest standard. Step inside and the fitments and cleanliness would do a good hotel proud.



Campsite and ablutions built into the fig tree

One section of the Tsauchab River along this stretch is fed by a spring, and the pools contain water all the year round. Because of this, there is a stretch of riparian forest, mostly of wild figs, that is home to a multitude of birds and provides delightful walks through the deep shade. The channel of the river shows evidence of the flash floods that are a feature of much of Namibia, and the roots of some of the fig trees have been well exposed through the erosion of the river banks.



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Roots exposed by erosion

In the evening we were treated to magnificent sunsets and were greeted in the morning by a slow parade of kudu along a ridge overlooking the campsite. In the absence of other campers in the vicinity we felt especially privileged to share these experiences in the absolute quiet that is such a rarity in the city.

This is a spot definitely worth a visit.



Familiar chat at Tsauchab campsite

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