

**Half-day and full-day outings from Swakopmund provide the holiday visitor with many additional sightseeing and activity options. Some of these may be enjoyed individually; others require making prior arrangements with specialised tour operators or activity providers. Highlights amongst the excursion destinations that provide truly unique experiences and are exclusive to the coastal areas and the Namib Desert of Namibia are:**

**Sandwich Harbour** – a small desert paradise in a remote area south of Walvis Bay and a must for the keen birder! A fresh water source situated right next to the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Namib Desert dunes attracts a large variety of bird species, some of them endemic to this part of Namibia. This natural sanctuary is incorporated into the Namib Naukluft Park, Africa's fourth-largest nature conservation area, and a permit has to be obtained prior to entering the park. The terrain on the only access route is so rough (photo right) that it poses great challenges even to the experienced off-road driver, and this excursion should therefore be booked through a specialised tour company only. Guided full-day tours include transportation in a 4x4 vehicle suitable for this particular environment, services of a knowledgeable and experienced driver-guide, park permit and entrance fees, as well as picnic lunch and refreshments.



**Cape Cross Seal Reserve** is situated about two hours drive north of Swakopmund and home to the largest breeding colony of Cape fur-seals in the southern hemisphere. Protected by a remote stretch of beach on a secluded bay, the seals find ideal living conditions for raising their offspring. Although the numbers may vary subject to the season, colony members in excess of 80 000 individuals have been counted regularly. They thrive on the nutrient-rich waters of the arctic Benguela Current in the southern Atlantic Ocean that here runs closest to the shoreline of the subcontinent. Together with often unpredictable winds, the Benguela Current also dominates Namibia's coastal weather patterns, and nightly fog clouds carry moisture inland for up to 20 km, sustaining life in the arid desert environment.

This excursion is easily done on a self-drive basis, with entrance fees to be paid on the spot.

A **Marine Cruise** in the Walvis Bay Lagoon is a highly recommended outing. Modern power boats allow guests close encounters with aquatic birds such as flamingos, pelicans and cormorants, with seals and two dolphin species - the Bottle-nose Dolphin commonly seen in these waters and the Heavyside Dolphin found only along the south-western coast of Africa. Giant Southern Right Whales put in an occasional appearance at the Namibia coast during the Southern African winter only and their sightings make for awesome experiences.

The **Spitzkoppe** (right) and the **Brandberg Mountains** to the north-east of Swakopmund are towering over the Namib Desert plains like sentinels. Rich in pre-historic rock art they are ideal destinations for mountaineering enthusiasts. Exciting rock climbing/abseiling at the Spitzkoppe is available through Rock & Rope Adventures in Swakopmund.

