

Thursday November 20

We returned to Cape town last evening after three wonderful days in Namibia. This country sits immediately to the north of South Africa and, although it is as big as Britain and France combined (slightly bigger than Texas), it has a population of only 2 million. Almost half live in the capital city of Windhoek, into which we flew from Cape Town, so the rest of the country is very sparsely populated. In fact, the vast majority is uninhabited desert and, indeed, Namibia has some very popular game reserves, much like other south African countries.

Ours was not so much a game viewing visit (although we did see springbok, oryx, ostrich, jackal, bat-eared fox, goshawks and weaver birds; rather we were there to view the huge sand dunes and the Atlantic coast—commonly referred to as the Skeleton Coast as a result of the large number of shipwrecks that have occurred over the centuries.

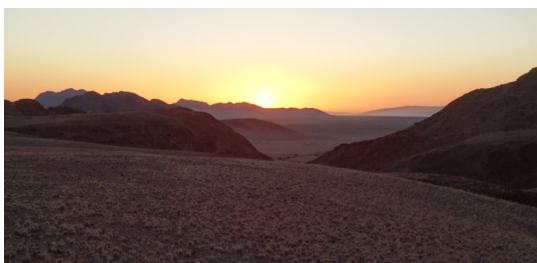
We flew from Windhoek in a small propeller plane (4 seater), landed on a gravel airstrip and then taken along sandy gravel roads by Land Rover to the lodge. This was truly an oasis in every sense with a small watering hole a few feet from the deck restaurant where we could watch the animals as we ate our meals. The rooms (all individual “cottages”) had everything, including private sun deck, a small pool and an open rooftop bed on which one could watch the night sky with its magnificent star display. We chose to sleep indoors (but I was tempted by the open air bed). Luxurious everything!

During our stay we took two Land Rover trips into the mountains near the lodge, experienced a beautiful sunset while sipping white wine on a mountain top and went down into a canyon that had been carved by water erosion over the years—but which was now dry except when they get the very occasional rain. The highlight of our visit was a scenic flight that we took (another small plane) over the vast area of sand dunes that cover more than 50 miles inland along a several hundred mile stretch of the coast. The dunes (and the occasional small mountain) reach a height of 1000 feet and in many cases are a quite vivid red in color and have been blown into the most amazing shapes. Some are smooth and rounded while others form a knife edge ridge on top of a several hundred feet high steep sided wall—looking almost man-made at times.

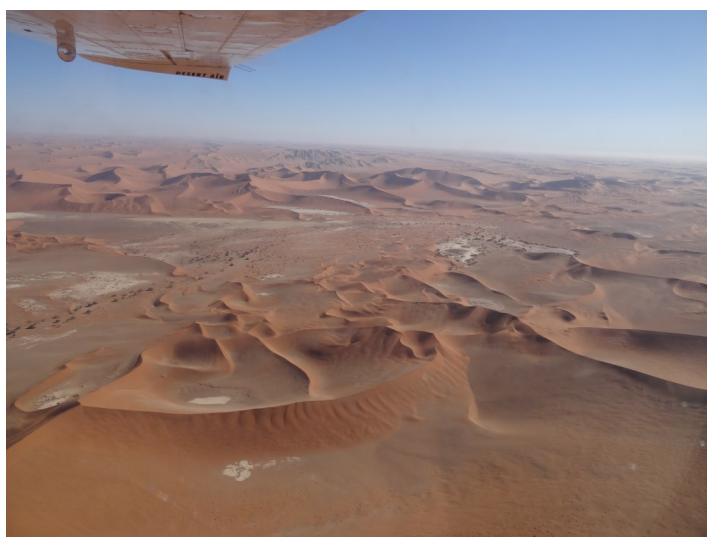
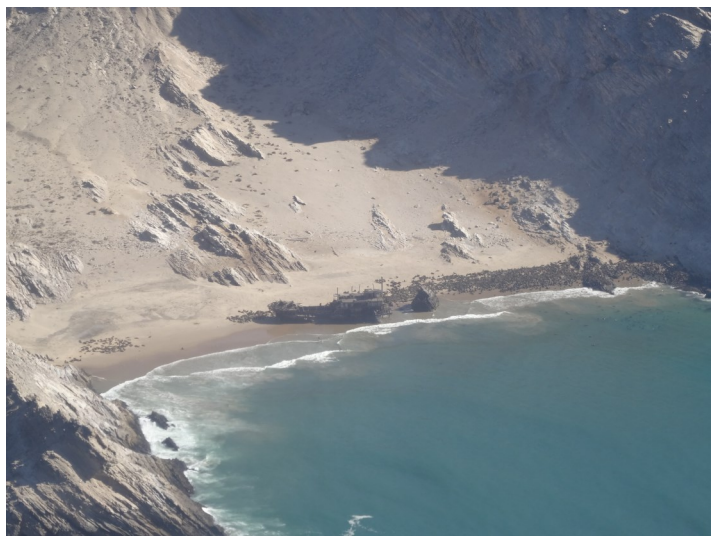
The other part of this scenic flight was along the coast itself where our pilot flew much lower so we could see the sites of two shipwrecks quite clearly and we got some close up views of thousands of seals bathing and sunning along the shore. Since the dunes at this point climb directly from the ocean, we seemed at times to be looking up to the peaks as we flew low over the water.

I find it very difficult to express the scale, the colors and the overall beauty of this region and hope that the few photographs will help the reader to appreciate this spectacular part of the world. As we said, it is very sparsely populated (we did land at a coastal town of 30,000 where diamond mining [off-shore!] is still big business and where we had a very nice lunch overlooking the harbor) but the rest of the trip we saw no signs of human habitation. I suspect that the way we visited (by plane) was in fact the only way we could have seen this part of Namibia.

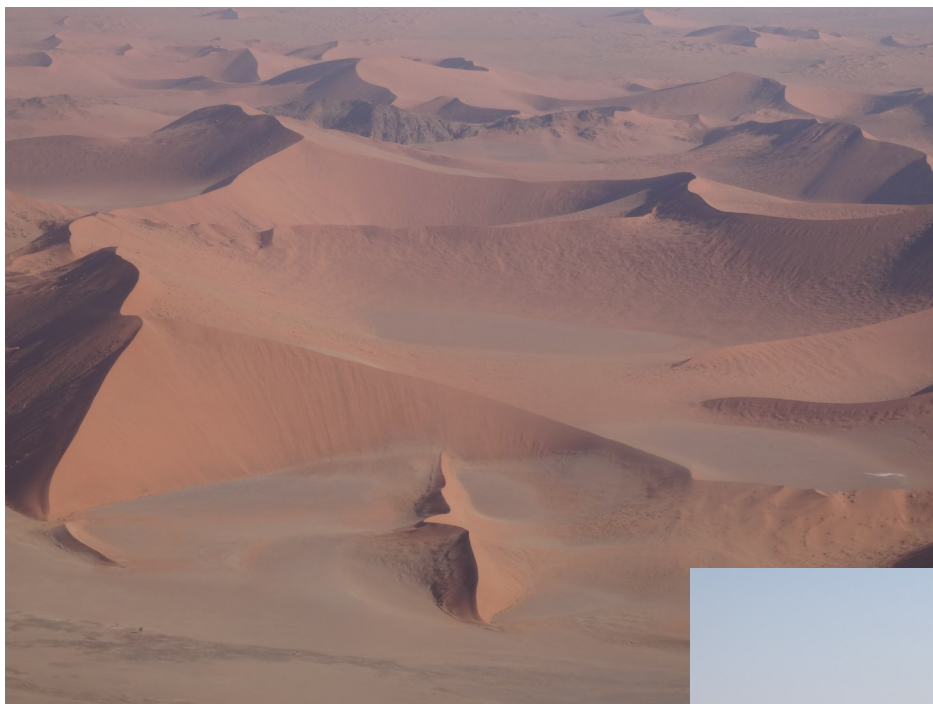
It was an amazing experience and one we will long remember—and we are very grateful to our nephew for suggesting this as a “must do” side trip from South Africa. Another exciting first for us that we would love to repeat.



**Kalula Lodge and
Mountain Sunset**



Skeleton Coast and our flight over the Dunes



***More later,
Bob and Molly***