FIRST IN

Elephants Roam This Remote Safari Camp in Namibia With Only 10 Tents, Private Pools, and Outdoor Showers

Hoanib Elephant Camp in Namibia's remote Kaokoland has 10 tented suites, with private plunge pools, outdoor showers, and exceptional views.

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An elephant walking past the Hoanib Elephant Camp in Namibia.
Credit: Hoanib Elephant Camp

WHAT WE LIKE

- The intimate lodge has only 10 tented suites, including two family ones, with private plunge pools, outdoor showers, and expansive views from each room.
- The property makes the most of its secluded setting, where guests get to explore the wide expanses of desert and winding riverbeds without encountering other safari vehicles.
- Named after the desert-adapted elephants who call the region home, every stay directly supports local communities and wildlife conservation projects.

HOANIB ELEPHANT CAMP

From my shaded perch on the room's raised deck, I watched an elephant amble past, light puffs of sand rising with each footstep. He moved slowly, foraging for leaves as the mountains in the far distance lit up under the sharp midday sun. It was an apt start to my time at Hoanib Elephant Camp, the newest addition to Natural Selection's portfolio, named after the desert-adapted elephants who call this remote region home.

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The mischievous interloper, it turns out, was Oliver, the same 33-year-old bull elephant we had seen walking the sandy Hoanib riverbed on the drive into camp. While there are fewer than 100 elephants across the Hoanib and Hoarusib river systems, over the course of my three-night stay at the lodge, we saw elephants roaming the landscape solo and in tight-knit matriarchal herds daily. This natural spectacle was complemented by many of the area's other wildlife: statuesque desert-adapted giraffes, lions, kudu antelopes, zebras, a bevy of birdlife from the Verreaux's eagles to tiny, brilliantly plumaged bee-eaters.

Opened in May 2026, Hoanib Elephant Camp is located in northwest Namibia's remote Kaokoland. The lodge is set in the Sesfontein Community Conservancy, and the setting is as mesmerizing as the animals that inhabit it: ancient, towering mountains; vast expanses of desert; rippled, ever-shifting sand dunes, their fine grains driven inland from the coast only about 31 miles away. The winding, dry riverbeds are dotted with massive Ana trees, whose roots dive 98 to 130 feet deep into hidden subterranean water. (While the riverbeds were completely dry during my June dry-season visit, from November to March, with enough rain, they flow fast.)

Interior of the main area.
Credit: Hoanib Elephant Camp

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Early the next morning, we sat surrounded by a herd of 13 elephants. As they moved closely past the 4x4 safari vehicle, an especially curious elephant stopped to gently nudge it with its trunk in quiet exploration. A pounding heartbeat later, she continued along with the rest of the herd, their lumbering bodies backlit by the rising sun as they made their way down the riverbed.

We sat in quiet awe as our guide explained how he and his fellow guides recognize each of the area's elephants, from their individual tracks to their distinctive characteristics. He also pointed out a number of tuskless elephants in the herd as well as some of the newer additions, adorable and frolicking with tiny trunks that swung wildly, still lacking the wizened control of their elders.

These observations aren't solely for our edification. In addition to sharing their deep knowledge of this rugged corner of the world and its wild residents, the guides at Hoanib Elephant Camp are uniquely positioned to help monitor the movements of the desert-adapted elephants of northwest Namibia. The data collected during game drives offers a deeper understanding of their movements, supporting vital research that helps protect the elephants, key migration corridors, and their coexistence with local communities. It's one of the many conservation efforts that are directly supported by a stay at the camp.

That night, tucked into one of the canvas chairs encircling the lodge's fire pit, a gin and tonic in hand and eyes riveted on the endless sky sparkling above, I thought back to our time alongside these resilient animals who have adapted to survive in this wild, remote corner of Namibia. It's rare enough to have the opportunity to sit and be briefly immersed in their world. It feels even more extraordinary that this time spent among them can play even the smallest role in their continued existence, long after a trip becomes memory.

Below, my full review of Hoanib Elephant Camp.

The Rooms

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Interior of a guest tent.
Credit: Hoanib Elephant Camp

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Hoanib Elephant Camp's 10 tented rooms include two family suites that extend a winding line in both directions from the central communal area, connected by long, stone-lined pathways.

I stayed in room eight, set to the far left. The distance between suites allows for plenty of privacy, though I was grateful for the mandatory escort to and from the main area in the early mornings and the evenings after dark—especially after learning a trio of lions had wandered through camp the night before.

Both the exterior design—by Swakopmund-based architect Kirby Mackintosh—and the interiors—by the Windhoek-based MoiMoi Interior & Product Design Studio—draw on the surrounding landscapes. The tan hue of the tented fabric on both the rooms and the main structure was chosen to echo the golden grasses found in the region after the rainy season moves through. Two heavy, curved walls bookend each room, providing protection from harsh desert winds and helping frame the stunning vistas. Lightweight canvas walling offers shelter without feeling fully separated from the elements.

Inside, a full wall of floor-to-ceiling windows means there are sweeping views from pretty much every spot you opt to stand, sit, or lay on. Sliding glass doors provide access to the large, bleached timber verandas complete with a plunge pool, lounge chairs, and an outdoor shower.

The en suite bathrooms include a double vanity with stone tops from Karibib in Western Namibia, in a tone similar to the sands outside. An extremely spacious indoor shower is stocked with toiletries, handcrafted in Namibia using desert-inspired botanicals. Custom-made baskets by the local Himba community house vanity boxes and other essentials.

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Food and Drink

Dine al fresco at the outdoor dining.
Credit: Hoanib Elephant Camp

The small coffee and tea bar in each room made early-morning caffeination easy, especially important when rising before the sun for the day's first game drive. In the main area, an additional pour of caffeine and a few grab-and-go options were set out for a quick pre-game drive bite. Even if you choose to forgo a 6 a.m. bite, you won't go hungry. There's a mid-morning game drive stop for tea or French press coffee in the bush, paired with an assortment of cookies and muffins. Once back at the lodge, a full hot breakfast can be enjoyed at one of the indoor or outdoor tables on the raised terrace of the main area.

Lunch was served at the lodge; however, my favorite afternoon meal at Hoanib Elephant Camp took place in the bush after the team surprised us with a long table set up on the banks of the dry riverbed. We enjoyed fresh salads, pastas, and pita bread in the delightful shade of a tall Ana tree, with a large, sloping sand dune behind us and plenty of wildlife sightings on the way in and out.

Sundowners of choice—cold beers, gin and tonics made with Namibian Desolate gin, chilled bottles of sauvignon blanc—took place at one of the many scenic viewpoints in the area. Meanwhile, dinner back at the lodge was a plated affair, often with an option for game meat, fish (such as kabeljou, a popular local fish), or a vegetarian option.

The Spa

Scenic view from the main pool.
Credit: Hoanib Elephant Camp

There are a variety of classic treatments on offer, from massages to facials to scrubs. During my stay, I was torn between the African calabash massage, a therapeutic treatment that uses a smooth, rounded calabash to apply gentle pressure to help relieve tension, and the Namibian sandstone massage with heated stones to ease my travel-tense muscles. In the end, I opted for the stones and was very happy with the choice.

Treatments, offered either in the designated wellness room just off the main area or directly in your suite, use products by Namibian brand Emssence, which are hand-blended in small batches in Windhoek.

Accessibility

Rooms at Hoanib Elephant Camp are not ADA-compliant, and there are rocky paths leading to various parts of the property.

How to Book

Hoanib Elephant Camp is not part of any points-based loyalty program.

Nightly rates at Hoanib Elephant Camp start from $1,299 per person.

Every T+L hotel review is written by an editor or reporter who has stayed at the property, and each hotel selected aligns with our core values.