



## **CANYON KLIPSPRINGER TRAIL**

### **A self-guided trail in the northern section of the Fish River Canyon**

Enjoy this bucketlist experience of hiking in the second largest canyon in the world. With only a daypack to carry, you are free to explore the pristine canyon surrounds in one of the largest private protected areas in Africa, the Gondwana Canyon Park-hiking through the geological marvel of the canyon carved over millions of years, swimming in the river, dreaming at the campfire and falling asleep under a dazzling night sky. With luggage and equipment conveyed between the overnight camps, hikers need only pack water, snacks and cameras for the day. Cosy rustic camps, set on the riverbank and canyon rim, offer cabins with soft beds, cooking and bathroom facilities.

The Fish River Canyon runs through the transitional zone of two desert systems, the Nama Karoo and the succulent Karoo, one of the most diverse deserts on earth. The landscape is characterised by meandering gorges up to 300m deep, which twist and turn through ancient layers of rock. The flora includes unique plants like the quiver tree, euphorbia and tamarisk; and the fauna, animals such as mountain zebra, klipspringer and kudu. With a little luck, African fish eagles, grey herons, white-breasted cormorants, rosy-faced lovebirds and Egyptian geese can also be spotted.

### **Highlights**

Diverse canyon scenery, including high plateaus with 360-degree panoramic views, gorges and springs; swimming in natural pools; and the fascinating plant and wildlife of the Nama Karoo.

Skip stones, skinny-dip in the river, savour spectacular scenery, read the 'Bushman's newspaper' (i.e. tracks in the sand), star-gaze and lap up the rare opportunity of having the majestic canyon all to yourself.

## **General information**

The Klipspringer Trail is a leisure trail created for hikers to enjoy the natural surroundings and canyon scenery at a relaxed pace.

Hikers follow the trail description using signs and cairns (small piles of rocks) as markers. The route takes you through rock gullies, over the Fish River and on zebra paths. (Please note that it is not always a distinct path.)

The trail is open from 15 April to 15 September. Contact the Gondwana Travel Centre to check for availability.

Minimum of 4, maximum of 12 people.

Age: From 12 years upwards, depending on fitness levels. Please note that physical fitness is required for the trail.

Duration: 4 nights/3 days with a total distance of  $\pm 32$ km.

Check in and out at the Klipspringer Base Camp in the Gondwana Canyon Park, 650km south of Windhoek ( $\pm 120$ km/ $\pm 2$ hrs from Keetmanshoop).

Hikers spend the night before the trail at the base camp where they receive a trunk to store their belongings. Each morning the trunks are collected from the overnight camps between 8 and 9am.

A map is provided when booking the trail.

## **Trail description:**

### **Arrival and introduction at Klipspringer Base Camp**

Hikers must check in at Klipspringer Base Camp the day before the trail begins between 14:00 and 15:00.

Ensure that you receive a map from the Gondwana head office detailing the route to the base camp. (Kindly note that although the road leading from the C12 to Klipspringer Base Camp is only 22km, it will take at least 45 minutes to traverse.)

The access road is not suitable for sedan vehicles and hikers with sedans will need to request a pick-up from Canyon Roadhouse, 50km away, where they can leave their cars. The rate is from N\$ 450 per vehicle (open vehicle – up to 6 people). Please ensure you request this prior to your arrival, as it will need to be arranged.

Secure parking is available on site for vehicles.

Klipspringer Base Camp is a quaint old farm house with a spacious veranda, comfortable rooms and ample bathroom facilities.

A braai (barbecue) will be provided for the evening meal.

## **Day 1: Start of the trail to Camp Battlesnake(±14km)**

After coffee and rusks, hikers will be dropped off at the start of the trail. The trail follows a river gully with natural stone steps down to the Löwen River. Look out for kudu and zebra tracks, rocks etched with fossilised water ripples and the nimble rock hyraxes (dassies), the nearest living relative to the elephant.

On reaching the bottom of the canyon, turn left to walk in a westerly direction alongside the Löwen River (a tributary of the Fish River) for approximately 1.5km between ancient towering rock walls. The Löwen River is named after the lions that once frequented the area.

Enjoy a break at the confluence of the Löwen and Fish rivers before continuing on the left bank, following the meandering route of the Fish River in a westerly, then southerly direction.

A sign against the slope marks a convenient place to cross the river onto the right bank. Hop from stone to stone, or wear water shoes to walk across. Keep close to the scree slope on the right bank until a series of rocks sculpted into fascinating designs by the water makes an easy river crossing. The rocks have a natural Jacuzzi in their midst and provide the perfect place for a lunch break.

Cross over to the opposite bank where you will notice a sign marking the start of an ascent up the stone steps of a river gully. A ladder assists you in negotiating a stony stretch higher up.

Once at the top, follow the path to the right onto the plateau, passing the Klipspringer Viewpoint with breath-taking views over the canyon depths and beyond. The path continues to Camp Battlesnake, so named for the legendary giant snake that, according to Nama lore, created the Fish River Canyon. As the story goes, the Nama engaged in an epic battle against the gigantic leviathan that was preying on their livestock. Its death throes are said to have produced the meandering shape of the canyon as we know it today.

The camp's cosy central cabin with a shaded veranda overlooks the canyon and the smaller 2-bedded wooden cabins are dotted around it. Make a fire in the donkey boiler for a hot shower and relax outside as the golden afternoon light paints the canyon in gold.

## **Day 2: Battlesnake to Koelkrans(±8km)**

There's no need to rush on this leisurely - and relatively short - day, so lie in and enjoy a late start before retracing your steps along the canyon rim. A sign marks a steep descent down an old zebra path. Take it slowly and watch your step on the loose shale. Stop halfway down near the cactus-like euphorbia and look north to appreciate the beautiful canyon scenery.

When you reach the riverbed, turn left and keep on the left bank. Look out for rock engravings on the dark dolomite ridge on your right. Remnants of stone kraals (*klipkrale*) are also visible along the path. The stone enclosures were once used to keep goats and sheep safe from predators during the night.

Before the next bend, look up at the cliff face on the right-hand-side to see if you can spot the stone formation that resembles the late Michael Jackson with his stubby nose.

Pause on the rocks for tea breaks and swims, and look for tracks in the sand, including the handprints of baboons and the spoor of the elusive leopard.

Continue until you reach an easy river crossing, where boulders are conveniently strewn across the river. A well-worn zebra path against the slope on the right-hand side leads southwards in the direction of Koelkrans Camp.

Two camelthorn trees with gnarled trunks and crescent-shaped seed pods are picturesque landmarks against the canyon walls. The far one supports a large sociable weaver nest; a cool and communal home in the desert.

The next river crossing directly opposite the camp is marked by a grove of tamarisk trees. Koelkrans Camp is nestled in the riverbed against the rocky cliff face. If the boat is on the bank, row across, or walk further downstream where you can cross at the rocks, backtracking to the camp.

As its name suggests, Koelkrans -surrounded by ebony and tamarisk trees -is your shady hideaway for the rest of the day. A small cabin, built on a ridge, serves as the dining area and kitchen, while the overnight cabins are set below. Pull chairs out to enjoy views of the river, lie back and read a book or frolic in the water. Take a stroll through Tamatiekloof in the late afternoon, paddle on the river (ensure that you pull the boat high onto the riverbank afterwards!) or walk past the kitchen cabin onto the *koppie* to enjoy sundowners from above.

The stars can be appreciated from the al fresco showers and from around the fire-pit in between the cabins, where supper sizzles enticingly over the coals.

### **Day 3: Koelkrans to Horseshoe Camp (±9km)**

From Koelkrans Camp, cross over the small Tamatie riverbed and veer right towards the Fish River. Walk downstream (i.e. left) along the riverbank over rocks sculpted by time.

Before the bend in the river, boulder-hop onto the right bank. Remember to pause for rest stops and swims as you will soon leave the river to move onto higher ground.

Keep on the rocks on the far right-hand bank as the river bends once again and continue walking along the riverbank. You will soon be able to spot Horseshoe Camp on the rim high above you.

The path up the small, stony hill on the right leads to large pebble plain, adorned with an interesting array of rocks. From here you will be able to see the steep zebra track which zigzags up to the plateau. Walk across the pebble plain and down to the river. If the water is low you can cross at this point. Otherwise, cross at the rocks further along and backtrack to reach the beginning of the zebra track.

Take it slow on this steep incline and stop often to catch your breath, rest and appreciate the scenery. Pause at the top for the vista and to take impressive photos standing or 'hanging on' at the edge of the world.

The trail leads over the rocky terrain of the plateau decorated with shiny 'desert pavement' and prickly euphorbias.

Soon, Horseshoe camp becomes visible ahead. The camp, built right on the edge of the rim, has exquisite views over the horseshoe-shaped river far below. With a bathroom built with one of the best views in the world and the delight of the small stone-and-wood cabins, the camp is the ideal and ultimate ending of the canyon trail.

Rest in the shade, shower- with a view-or take a stroll to explore the surroundings. A short path to the east leads to a dry riverbed and waterfall, and a spring far below, often frequented by game. At the end of the day, cook supper over the outside fire and dine by lantern-light at the long wooden table indoors. The final night of the trail is one of laughter and camaraderie after three days of canyon splendour.

Enjoy the last night under a heaven of glittering stars from inside your cabin or carry your bed outside to sleep under the magnificence of the night sky. A rosy sky greets you in the morning before you are collected for the ride back to Klipspringer Base Camp.

## **Water**

The water from the taps at Battlesnake and Horseshoe camps (Day 1 & Day 3) is suitable for drinking. Large plastic containers provide drinking water at Koelkrans (Day 2). Hikers can fill water bottles for the day at the overnight camps. (The water in the river is not recommended for drinking, unless boiled or filtered.)

## **Camp amenities**

Each overnight camp has cabins with beds, mattresses and small pillows. Hikers will be issued with a sheet, pillow case and small towel at Klipspringer Base Camp before they set off, to be returned to base camp at the end of the trail. The camps have bathrooms with flush toilets and showers. Hikers will need to make a fire in the donkey boiler (wood-fire water heater) to heat water for hot showers, if required. The water usually takes about half an hour to heat up, once the fire is made. A central cabin serves as a dining area and kitchen, while a fire pit or braai-place outdoors is provided for braais/barbeques.

## **Cooking facilities**

Each camp has its own cutlery and crockery, including a kettle and a set of large pots. Braai grids and a gas stove are also provided.

## **Firewood**

Firewood for the donkey and braai is available at each overnight hut. (Hikers are required to bring their own firelighters and matches.)

## Safety precautions

Each overnight camp has a radio, which can be used to contact base camp in case of an emergency. Hikers may also hire a pencil flare as a safety precaution, to be used only in the event of a night-time evacuation. Hikers are requested to pay a deposit for the flares, which will be returned to them when the flares are returned to base camp.

## Requirements

Hikers are required to sign an **indemnity form** before commencing the trail. This will be issued at Base Camp.

**Comprehensive medical insurance** is recommended to make provision for cancellation, curtailment, medical expenses, emergency evacuation and repatriation, as well as the loss or damage to personal baggage and loss of foreign currency.

## Unforeseeable circumstances

Although we do our utmost to conduct the trail as described above, unforeseeable events such as unfavourable weather and river conditions or unexpected issues may cause us to change the course of the trail – or even cancel the trail if circumstances place the hiker at risk. We apologise in advance for any inconvenience.

## Included:

- The 45-minute transfer to the start of the trail in an open vehicle.
- The 30-minute transfer from Horseshoe Camp to Klipspringer Base Camp at the end of the trail.
- Trunks to store luggage and supplies (size: 81cmx47cmx37cm).
- Daily collection and delivery of trunks to the overnight camps.
- A set amount of firewood.
- Drinking water at the camps.
- Overnight accommodation at Klipspringer Base Camp before the trail, including a braai/barbeque supper.

## Not included:

- Daypack
- Sleeping bag (0°C)
- Water purifying tablets
- Food for the trail
- A transfer for those hikers with sedan vehicles from the Roadhouse to Klipspringer Base Camp at N\$450/per transfer (of up to 6 people).

## What to take along:

- A smile and appreciation for Mother Nature
- Food supply for the three days, including snacks
- A daypack for carrying 6 to 8kg
- Sufficient water bottles to carry at least 2 litres of water
- Clothes for the trail
- As weather can change from day to day, a warm fleece/sweater and windbreaker are recommended
- Comfortable walking shoes/boots (it is recommended that they have been worn in and provide ankle support)
- Sunglasses and a shatterproof case (optional)
- A small hand towel/sarong to dry your feet at river crossings
- A pair of sandals or river shoes to wear at the camp and to use for crossing rivers
- Sleeping bag (down or synthetic) for up to 0°C (mattresses and small pillows are supplied)
- A head-torch with spare batteries
- Binoculars (optional)
- Toilet paper
- Firelighters (eg. Blitz) and matches
- A basic medical aid kit (including plasters for blisters and any personal medication)
- Plastic bag/dry bag to protect your camera on river crossings
- A sun hat
- Sun protection cream
- Beanie
- Bathing suit, if required
- Playing cards and your favourite book



# KLIPSPRINGER

## SLACKPACKING TRAIL

### NAMIBIA

#### DIRECTIONS TO KLIPSPRINGER TRAIL BASE CAMP

(Starting Point  
of the trail)

From Keetmanshoop,  
take the B4 towards  
Lüderitz. Turn southwards  
onto the D545 (past Naute  
Dam). Continue on the  
D545, which merges  
with the C12, for about  
62km. Turn right at the  
sign: 'Klipspringer Base  
Camp' (please ensure that  
you close the farmgate  
after you.) The Camp is  
22km from the turnoff.

The road is only accessible  
by 4-wheel-drive vehicle.  
This is the meeting point  
for the Klipspringer Trail.

You should not arrive  
later than 15h00.





## Rates: N\$2000.00 per person

### Contact the Gondwana Travel Centre to check availability:

42 Nelson Mandela Avenue, Windhoek  
PO Box 80205, Windhoek, Namibia  
+264 (0)61 427200  
reservations@gondwana-collection.com

### Cancellation fees:

4 weeks before arrival: 10%  
3 - 4 weeks before arrival: 20%  
2 - 3 weeks before arrival: 30%  
1 - 2 weeks before arrival: 50%  
1 week - 3 days before arrival: 75%  
1 - 3 days before arrival: 90%

Available for sale at Klipspringer Base Camp (order forms will be handed to you at Base Camp): Kindly note, cash only!

Items	Prices from
8kg Firewood (bag)	N\$ 45.00
Fire Starters/Blitz	N\$ 30.00
Braai Packs (1 lamb chop, boerewors (sausage) 15cm, 1 chicken drumstick)	N\$ 110.00
Emergency Flare (deposit refunded if unused)	N\$ 200
White House Wine – Old Man’s blend (750ml)	N\$ 147.00
Red House Wine – Old Man’s blend (750ml)	N\$ 156.00
Coke (330ml)	N\$ 20.00
Coke Light (330ml)	N\$ 23.00
Fruit Tree Orange Juice Bottle (350ml)	N\$ 25.00
Fruit Tree Orange Juice Bottle (350ml)	N\$ 25.00
Still Water (500ml)	N\$ 20.00
Savanna Dry (330ml)	N\$ 33.00
Savanna Light (330ml)	N\$ 33.00
Tafel Lager (330ml) can	N\$ 30.00
Windhoek Lager (330ml) can	N\$ 30.00

Braai packs and drinks will be delivered to the overnight camps each day with the luggage and stored in cool boxes.

Please note that **no** additional orders will be filled **during** the trail itself.

### A route guide:

Hikers have the option of a guided trail. Please contact Gondwana Travel Centre for prices.