African Trilogy: Pretoria to Walvis Bay on Rovos Rail

https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/african-trilogy-rovos-rail/



Overview

The Highlights

- Thirteen nights on board *Rovos Rail*, one of the world’s top luxury trains, with all meals and drinks included;

- Overnight stays and exclusive game drives at two of Namibia's top wildlife conservancies: Sossusvlei and Etosha;

- Additional game drives at Kruger Park and eSwatini's magnificent Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park;

- Visit a Cheetah conservation project;

- Discover the dramatic landscapes of the Drakensberg Mountains;

- Explore Durban’s beautiful Botanic Gardens;

- Visit to the vast Fish River Canyon;

- Traverse the edge of the Kalahari Basin, the Karoo & the Namib Deserts;

- Visit the historic Kimberley Diamond Mine Museum;

- Experience local traditions at Mantenga Cultural Village;

- Explore Windhoek’s fascinating Transport Museum.

The Tour

Take a deep dive into three amazing countries — South Africa, Namibia, and eSwatini — on the African Trilogy. The scenery on this 16-day private rail tour aboard *Rovos Rail* is truly out of this world, from the abundantly green Drakensberg Escarpment to the Namib Desert.

Itinerary

Day 1: Pretoria

This afternoon, depart from Rovos Rail Station, Pretoria. Guests may freshen up in their cabins before joining fellow travelers in the lounge car or observation car.

Dinner is served in the dining cars as the train travels the eastern line to Middelburg. *Dress: formal.*

Day 2: At leisure on board

Today is a day to relax and take in the incredible scenery. The rolling hills of eMakhazeni, eNtokozweni and Dullstroom are a welcome sight.

Dinner is served in the dining cars en route to Malelane. *Dress: Formal*

Day 3: Kruger National Park

Today, enjoy a game drive in the Kruger National Park with tea and lunch. The famous Kruger

Park has 2-million hectares of an unrivaled diversity of life forms and is home to an impressive number of species: 336 species of trees, 49 species of fish, 34 species of amphibians, 114 species of reptiles, 507 species of birds and 147 species of mammals, including the Big Five.

Rejoin the train for tea in the lounge and observation cars.

Dinner is served in the dining cars en route to eSwatini. *Dress: Formal*

Day 4: eSwatini

Breakfast is served in the dining cars until departure, after which we will undertake border formalities with eSwatini. Disembark at Mpaka.

The tiny mountainous Kingdom of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) borders South Africa and Mozambique and sustains two capital cities: Mbabane is the administrative capital and Lobamba is the royal and legislative capital. In April 2018, Swaziland changed its name to the Kingdom of eSwatini (meaning “place of the Swazi”) and is an absolute monarchy.

Visit Swazi Candles and Mantenga Cultural Village with lunch at Mantenga Lodge. The village is a living museum of old traditions that represents a classic Swazi lifestyle during the 1850s.

After, re-board the train and enjoy tea in the lounge and observation cars. Dinner is served in the dining cars. Border formalities take place with South Africa this evening. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 5: Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park

Continental breakfast is served in the dining cars until early morning departure transfer to Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park for a game drive.

After, return to the train for rest and lunch in the dining cars. Travel towards Empangeni as you enjoy tea in the lounge and observation cars.

Dinner is served in the dining cars en route to Durban. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 6: Durban

After breakfast, enjoy a tour of Durban and the botanical gardens. Durban is the third largest city in South Africa and enjoys great importance due to its industry and very large port. Drive along the ‘Golden Mile’ promenade where numerous hotels and restaurants are situated.

After, transfer to Umhlanga for lunch on the beachfront with the afternoon at your leisure.

Return to the train as it traverses the Valley of a Thousand Hills towards Ladysmith. Tea in the lounge and observation cars. Dinner is served in the dining cars. *Dress: “Africa” Theme or casual.*

Day 7: At leisure on board

Today is a day to relax and take in the incredible scenery of the Drakensberg Mountains, first

named by the Voortrekkers, who thought the unbroken chain of heavily weathered peaks reminded them of the spines on a dragon's back, hence the name 'Dragon Mountain' or Drakensberg in Afrikaans.

Pass some of the highest peaks at 11,400 feet (3,450 meters). Lunch is served in the dining cars. Tea in the lounge and observation cars. Dinner is served in the dining cars. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 8: Kimberley

After breakfast, enjoy a tour of Kimberley's Diamond Mine Museum and the Big Hole. Capital of the Northern Cape, Kimberley is well known for the discovery of diamonds that led to its establishment in 1871.

Lunch is served in the dining cars. The observation car will be leading the train until after dinner.

Travel through the Karoo, a vast semi-desert region that was once an enormous inland sea. Over millions of years, volcanic matter was ground down and deposited as silt upon the seabed to form what geologists call the Karoo system.

Tea in the lounge car and observation car at the front of the train. Dinner is served in the dining cars. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 9: Upington

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast this morning as the train travels into Upington on the Orange River (activity TBC on the day).

The Orange River is the longest river in South Africa (1,511 miles or 2,432 km). It rises in the Drakensberg Mountains in Lesotho and flows westwards through South Africa to the Atlantic Ocean. It forms part of the borders between South Africa and Lesotho, and South Africa and Namibia. Except for Upington, it does not pass through any major cities. Attorney General of the Cape, Sir Thomas Upington was principally responsible for liquidating the business activities of all the Orange River pirates and capturing their leader, Klaas Lucas. When the desperadoes were finally chased away in 1884, the town was founded on the banks of the Orange River and named in his honor.

After the activity in Upington, return to the train for lunch in the dining cars. Border formalities with Namibia. Tea in the lounge car and observation car at the rear of the train. Dinner is served in the dining cars en route to Holoog. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 10: Fish River Canyon & Garas Park

After breakfast, transfer (approximately 1 hour) to the Fish River Canyon. The Fish River rises in the center of the country before flowing south into the Orange River on Namibia's border with South Africa. It has formed the great Fish River Canyon – the largest canyon in the southern hemisphere and only second to Arizona's Grand Canyon in terms of size. The vast rocky landscape breaks up into a series of spectacular cliffs.

After, return to the train for lunch as you travel along the southern reaches of the Kalahari Basin.

Visit Garas Park, home of the otherworldly Quiver Trees, and roughly 300 specimens of the Aloe dichotomy. The prehistoric trees and stark environment make for great photographic opportunities.

Enjoy afternoon tea, and, later, dinner, as the train travels north through the Kalahari to Mariental. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 11: Sossusvlei

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before transferring to the airstrip for your one-hour flight to Sossusvlei.

The dunes of the Namib Desert were created by sand carried by the wind from the coast. The sand here is over five million years old and is red in color due to its iron-oxide content. As the light changes during the day, so does the appearance of the dunes' characteristic color, allowing for interesting photographs at any time. The wind in the Sossusvlei area blows from all directions, causing the sand to form a star shape with multiple arms, hence the name "star dunes."

Check in to the lodge and enjoy lunch.

Afternoon desert drive and a bush dinner after sunset. Overnight at the lodge. *Dress: Casual.*

Day 12: Sossusvlei & Windhoek

Early wake-up call this morning with tea and coffee. Enjoy a desert drive with a full breakfast near the vlei (a seasonal minor lake or marsh).

Return to the lodge to use the facilities, check-out, and transfer to the airstrip for your one-hour flight to Windhoek. Situated in Namibia's central highlands, Windhoek is an attractive city surrounded by clusters of hills and the impressive Auas and Eros Mountains.

There you will enjoy lunch and visit the Transport Museum. The Trans-Namib Transport Museum outlines Namibian transport history, particularly that of the railway. The Independence Memorial Museum focuses on the anti-colonial resistance and the national liberation struggle of Namibia.

Re-board the train and travel onwards to Kranzberg. Dinner is served in the dining cars. *Dress: Formal.*

Day 13: Cheetah Conservation Project

Leisurely morning on board the train. Enjoy breakfast and lunch on board.

Mid-afternoon, visit a cheetah conservation project in Otjiwarongo. Founded in 1990, the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) is dedicated to saving cheetahs in the wild.

Re-board the train for dinner as you travel towards Otavi. *Dress: Formal*.

Day 14: Etosha National Park

After breakfast, transfer to a lodge in Etosha National Park. Etosha National Park gets its name from the Etosha Pan, a large salt pan forming part of the Kalahari Basin, and offers great game viewing. Etosha means ‘Great White Place’.

Check in and enjoy lunch, after which you will enjoy a game drive.

Dinner and overnight at the lodge. *Dress: Casual.*

Day 15: Etosha National Park

Enjoy an early breakfast followed by a game drive.

Return to the lodge for brunch. Transfer (approximately 2 hours) to re-board the train. Enjoy one last tea in the lounge or observation cars before dinner is served as the train travels southwest towards the Atlantic Ocean. *Dress: “1920s” Theme or casual.*

Day 16: Walvis Bay

Breakfast is served as the train traverses the Namib Desert towards Walvis Bay. The observation car will be at the front of the train for this last stretch – a different aspect that our rail enthusiasts enjoy.

The Namib Desert stretches for more than 1,200 miles (2,000 km) along the Atlantic coasts of Angola, Namibia and South Africa. The name is of Khoekhoegowab origin and means “vast place”. Having endured arid or semi-arid conditions for roughly 55-80 million years, the Namib may be the oldest desert in the world.

Arrive at journey’s end at Walvis Bay Station, Namibia.

Dates & Prices

2027 Dates

February 2 - February 17
October 5 - October 20

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Pullman Gold	ZAR 286,000	ZAR 376,000	25%
Deluxe	ZAR 385,000	ZAR 494,000	25%
Royal	ZAR 480,000	ZAR 960,000	25%

All prices are per person.
Tour priced in South African Rand (ZAR). For approximate exchange rates, visit http://www.xe.com.

2028 Dates

March 9 - March 24
October 5 - October 20

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Pullman Gold	ZAR 314,600	ZAR 413,600	25%
Deluxe	ZAR 423,500	ZAR 543,400	25%
Royal			
ZAR 528,000	ZAR 1,056,000	25%	

All prices are per person.
Tour priced in South African Rand (ZAR). For approximate exchange rates, visit http://www.xe.com.

More

Delays are possible — please plan accordingly.

Medical/evacuation insurance is required for this journey. Malaria prevention may be recommended. Note: entry into South Africa requires passport with two blank passport visa pages facing each other. Passport should have six months' validity beyond travel dates.

Pre and Post-Tours available:
Extend your journey before and/or after your train trip. We work with the best hotels, lodges, tour and safari operators in the region. Contact us for more information about adding on to your Rovos Rail journey.

Inside Track: IRT's Angela Walker and Rachel Hardy loved their time on Rovos Rail's *Pride of Africa*. Click here for part one of their report on the train, here for part two.