# Namibia Self-Drive Planning Checklist

Everything you need to prepare — organised by category

pocketguidenamibia.com

Work through each category before you leave. Items in the **Vehicle Preparation** section should be confirmed at the rental depot before driving away. Use the **Pocket Guide Namibia app** for offline maps, first aid guides, road conditions, and emergency protocols — no data connection required once downloaded.

## 1. DOCUMENTS & PAPERWORK

- [ ] **Valid passport**
  *Must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your travel dates and have at least 3 blank pages for entry and exit stamps.*
- [ ] **Namibia visa (if applicable)**
  *As of April 1, 2025, nationals of 33 countries — including the USA, UK, Germany, France, and most of Europe — now require a visa. Fee: N$1,600 (approx. €82 / US$88). Apply in advance via eservices.mhaiss.gov.na — strongly recommended over visa on arrival. Valid up to 90 days. South African nationals and most African Union citizens remain visa-free.*
- [ ] **International Driving Permit (IDP) — only if your license is not in English**
  *Technically required if your driver's license is not in English, though in practice authorities rarely ask for it. Non-English license holders (German, French, etc.) should still obtain one from their national automobile association before departure — it's good insurance if you are stopped. US, UK, and most English-language licenses are accepted as-is.*
- [ ] **Vehicle rental agreement**
  *Carry the original, not a copy. Keep it accessible — you'll need it at park gates and police checkpoints.*
- [ ] **Cross-border letter from rental company**
  *Essential if you plan to cross into Botswana, Zambia, or South Africa with the rental vehicle. Request this in advance.*
- [ ] **Vehicle insurance documents**
  *Confirm what is and isn't covered. Find out the excess and whether it applies to tyre and windscreen damage — common on gravel roads.*
- [ ] **National park reservations**
  *NWR parks like Etosha require pre-booked accommodation. Book months ahead in peak season (July–October).*
- [ ] **Travel insurance policy**
  *Ensure it covers self-drive, remote area travel, and emergency medical evacuation.*
- [ ] **Emergency contact list**
  *Written down, not just stored on your phone. Include your rental company's 24hr number, accommodation contacts, and Namibian emergency number (10111).*

## 2. VEHICLE PREPARATION — VERIFY AT THE DEPOT BEFORE YOU DRIVE AWAY

- [ ] **Spare tyres — ideally two**
  *Gravel road punctures are common. One spare is standard; two is strongly recommended for remote routes like the Skeleton Coast or Kaokoland.*
- [ ] **Tyre condition and pressure**
  *Ask the rental company to adjust pressure for gravel road driving — typically lower than tarmac. Confirm before you leave.*
- [ ] **Jack, wheel brace, and locking wheel nut key**
  *Confirm all are present and that you know how to use them before leaving the depot.*
- [ ] **Jump starter cables or battery pack**
  *Confirm inclusion. Dead batteries in remote areas are a real and common scenario.*
- [ ] **Basic tool kit**
  *At minimum: duct tape, zip ties, tow rope, and a shovel for sand recovery.*
- [ ] **Fuel range and jerry cans**
  *Fuel stations can be 200–300km apart in remote areas. Confirm your vehicle's range and whether jerry cans are included.*
- [ ] **Roof rack or storage solution**
  *If camping, confirm luggage can be properly secured. Unsecured gear on gravel roads is a safety hazard.*
- [ ] **Windscreen condition**
  *Inspect carefully before accepting the vehicle. Document any existing damage to avoid dispute on return.*

## 3. NAVIGATION & CONNECTIVITY

- [ ] **Pocket Guide Namibia app — download, set up, and plan your tour**
  *Download the app and create your account before you travel. Use it to plan your route, save locations, and build your itinerary before you leave home. The offline map downloads automatically on first use — it covers the entire country with pins for every location, from major parks to remote campsites. No data required for the map once downloaded. Booking tools require a connection.*
- [ ] **Use the Pocket Guide Namibia app to find your accommodation**
  *The app's map contains pins for accommodations across Namibia. Search directly in the app — no need to save separate GPS coordinates.*
- [ ] **Namibian SIM card (optional)**
  *MTC Namibia has the best coverage across all major towns and road networks. Available at MTC outlets in Windhoek with your passport and N$20. Useful for WhatsApp contact with accommodations.*
- [ ] **Paper map as backup**
  *Tracks4Africa or the Namibia Tourism Board map covers the main routes — available at Windhoek bookshops and petrol stations. Mark it up as you go; it makes a surprisingly good souvenir.*

## 4. SAFETY & EMERGENCY

- [ ] **First aid kit**
  *Include blister treatment, antiseptic, bandages, rehydration sachets, antihistamine, and personal prescription medication. Read the First Aid Tips section in the Pocket Guide Namibia app before your trip — covers CPR, hyperthermia, hypothermia, dehydration, soft tissue injuries, snake bites, and nosebleeds. Available offline.*
- [ ] **Breakdown plan**
  *Know your rental company's 24hr number. In remote areas: stay with your vehicle, place hazard triangles, conserve water, stay in shade, and don't attempt long walks in heat. Full protocol in the Vehicle & Roads section of the Pocket Guide Namibia app (offline).*
- [ ] **Satellite communicator or PLB (for remote routes)**
  *For Kaokoland or the Skeleton Coast, a Personal Locator Beacon or Garmin inReach is strongly recommended. Check the My Phone section of the Pocket Guide Namibia app for MTC coverage maps — available offline.*
- [ ] **Snake bite protocol awareness**
  *Venomous species include the Puff Adder, Cobra, and Black Mamba. Key rules: move away, stay calm, remove jewellery before swelling, position bite below heart level, apply light pressure bandage 20cm above bite, get to medical care fast. Do NOT cut the wound, use a tourniquet, or drink alcohol. Full guide in the Pocket Guide Namibia app First Aid Tips section.*
- [ ] **Sun protection**
  *Namibia's UV index is extreme. High-SPF sunscreen, a wide-brim hat, and UV-blocking sunglasses are non-negotiable.*
- [ ] **Emergency water supply in the vehicle**
  *Carry at least 5 litres per person beyond your daily supply. A breakdown in 40°C heat with no water is life-threatening.*

## 5. CAMPING & ACCOMMODATION

- [ ] **All accommodation pre-booked**
  *Especially for Etosha camps — NWR accommodation sells out months in advance in peak season. Don't assume you can arrive without a reservation.*
- [ ] **Confirmed check-in times**
  *Many camps have strict windows and lock gates at sunset. Arriving late can mean sleeping outside the gate.*
- [ ] **Camping equipment confirmed (if self-catering)**
  *Inspect rooftop tents and camping kits in Windhoek before departure. Test the tent, check the gas stove, and confirm cookware is complete.*
- [ ] **Firewood — buy locally**
  *Don't transport firewood across regions. Most camps sell it on-site. This prevents the spread of pests between ecosystems.*
- [ ] **Malaria precautions for northern regions**
  *The Kavango and Caprivi areas carry malaria risk, especially in summer (Nov–Apr). Consult a travel doctor before departure.*

## 6. FOOD & WATER

- [ ] **Stock up in Windhoek before departing**
  *Windhoek has well-stocked supermarkets (Checkers, Pick n Pay, Woermann Brock). Prices and selection drop significantly outside the capital.*
- [ ] **Know where the next fuel and food stop is**
  *Plan each day with the next resupply point in mind. Carry a day's extra food as a buffer.*
- [ ] **Water carrying capacity**
  *Most campsites have potable water, but not all. A 10-litre container per person for a two-day stretch is a reasonable baseline.*
- [ ] **Camp cooking setup**
  *A two-burner gas stove, a pot, a pan, and basic utensils covers most meals. Many rental kits include these — verify before you go.*
- [ ] **Braai (BBQ) supplies**
  *The braai is a Namibian institution. Bring or buy firelighters, a grid, and tongs. Most camps have designated braai areas.*
- [ ] **Cooler box / fridge**
  *A quality cooler box or 12V fridge is essential. Dairy and meat spoil quickly in the heat. Most rental 4x4 setups include a fridge — confirm this.*

## 7. CLOTHING & PERSONAL

- [ ] **Layering system for cold desert nights**
  *Namibia's desert nights are cold year-round. A fleece and windproof outer layer is the minimum; add a down jacket for winter trips (June–August).*
- [ ] **Dust protection**
  *A buff or bandana for gravel road dust. Long sleeves also help on long drives.*
- [ ] **Comfortable closed-toe shoes for walking**
  *Flip-flops are fine at camp. For walking outside the vehicle, closed shoes matter — especially with snake risk in the bush.*
- [ ] **Torch / headlamp with spare batteries**
  *Essential at camp. Red light mode preserves night vision and is less disturbing to wildlife.*
- [ ] **Power bank (fully charged)**
  *A breakdown can strand you for hours. A high-capacity power bank is cheap insurance.*

## 8. WILDLIFE & PARK ETIQUETTE

- [ ] **Never exit your vehicle inside game reserves (unless at designated spots)**
  *This is both a safety rule and a legal requirement inside Etosha and most other parks.*
- [ ] **Speed limits in parks**
  *60km/h on gravel, 40km/h near water holes. For your safety and the animals'.*
- [ ] **No off-road driving**
  *Stay on designated tracks. Desert soils are fragile and tyre tracks can persist for decades.*
- [ ] **No feeding wildlife**
  *Dangerous and illegal. It conditions animals to approach vehicles and creates conflict.*
- [ ] **Sunrise and sunset gate times**
  *Most parks open at sunrise and close at sunset. Being outside camp after dark carries a fine.*
- [ ] **Binoculars**
  *You'll regret not having them. A basic pair dramatically improves game viewing.*
- [ ] **Respect predator sightings**
  *Maintain distance, turn off your engine, wait quietly.*

## 9. MONEY & BUDGETING

- [ ] **Namibian Dollars and South African Rand**
  *Both accepted at par across Namibia. Draw cash in Windhoek — ATMs are scarce in rural areas.*
- [ ] **Cards accepted in towns, cash required in remote areas**
  *Most lodges and restaurants in towns accept Visa and Mastercard. Smaller camps and roadside stops are cash only.*
- [ ] **Park fees — credit card or cash**
  *NWR parks (including Etosha) accept card at main gates. Smaller community conservancies may be cash only.*
- [ ] **Budget for park entrance fees**
  *Etosha fees apply per person and per vehicle per day. It adds up over a multi-day stay — factor it in.*
- [ ] **Tipping norms**
  *10% at restaurants; N$20–50 per night for camp staff; N$100–200 per day for guides.*
- [ ] **Emergency fund**
  *Set aside N$3,000–5,000 for unexpected costs — tyre replacement, unplanned accommodation, or vehicle recovery.*