

ARareWorld.

THE TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE JOURNAL

Rwanda

BISATE LODGE
MARRIOTT KIGALI

South Africa

THE SAXON
SINGITA SABI SAND

Namibia

OMAANDA

Botswana

QOROKWE



Bisate Lodge

BARCELONA

Edition Cotton House

OMAANDA

Whole new world.



ZANNIER'S PORTFOLIO of boutique retreats established already in Megève and Siem Reap continues with the 2018 opening of Namibia's Omaanda. Omaanda is located within a fenced private reserve, just about 35 minutes by car from the

country's international airport in Windhoek. Zannier will open a second property in Namibia in 2019 called Sonop, a tented camp in the country's southern desert.

Omaanda is a private reserve in its infancy. There is a fairly reliable count on the population of most of the major wildlife, as most were introduced recently in specific quantities. It's a bit like the story of Noah's ark, especially in that the quantity of most species present here is two. There is much to come with respect to the maturity of this reserve, and for this reason, Omaanda wouldn't be our first recommendation for a first-time safari trip. Still, there's much to learn and observe here strictly from the stage this property is in, if the process of establishing a wildlife reserve is interesting to you. What's more, the camp itself is fabulous.

This was admittedly our very first visit to Namibia, and for only two days to visit this single property. We're hooked, and can't wait to return to explore the rest of the country.

A lot of people overuse this word but in this case it's true. Upon first arrival at camp, we were stunned. The common space's fabulous desert contemporary chic motif blends perfectly against views of the reserve's arid landscape. It was just getting to be golden hour when we arrived, and the large swimming pool couldn't have been more inviting.

No sooner than we arrived were we off for a sundown game drive with our guide Jonas. A bit about Jonas—There are some guides out there who are entertainers of sorts, but not Jonas. He's a bit more on the serious side. We still enjoyed our time with him, and appreciated his obvious passion for the establishment of this reserve. On our morning drive, we spotted the reserve's lions with a recent kill, but this was more than just a sighting. This



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meant that these new arrivals were settling into their new home, a good sign for the future of this reserve.

You won't see great herds of wildlife at Omaanda, for the most part just isolated sightings of ones and twos. The exception will be the reserve's rhinos, of which there are many. They won't say just how many out of protection for the rhinos. They also won't let you take a photo of them, for fear of guests posting and geotagging on social media. This is something they take very seriously.

Maybe the greatest draw of Omaanda is the exquisite cuisine. The breakfast here is divine, dare we say the best we've had in Africa. There is an inspiring and inventive menu of healthy and decadent treats alike, and everything was sublime. If we ever return, we know

exactly what we're having—the healthy breakfast bowl with the avocado. There's magic in that dish. Lunches are mezze style with a fabulous platter of little bites. Dinners typically have two beautiful choices available, though modifications and special requests will most certainly be accommodated.

Each of Omaanda's 12 huts is decorated in a contemporary minimalist style with an acute awareness of the desert. Most have one bedroom, but some have two bedrooms and two baths. There is a lovely simplicity to the décor, though amenities are quite complete, including a bar stocked with snacks and beverages, a fireplace, Wi-Fi, a television, and a bathtub. There's also an outdoor terrace looking over the reserve. During the daytime, warthogs often cross over the boardwalks that lead to the huts. One afternoon, when we awoke from a nap, a family of four were looking in the window from our terrace. So, be careful, but also, can you imagine a more cute thing to see waking up from a nap?

After we awoke, we called down to ask if our lunch mezze plate could be delivered to the hut. There was a



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF OMAANDA

bit of confusion for a moment, but it was quickly worked out, and the food arrived in a flash.

Most safari camps nowadays offer some kind of wellness option, usually basic massages that are at best OK.

DOS & DON'TS

DO consider a stop at Omaanda at the beginning or end of a greater exploration through Namibia. It's about 35 minutes from the international airport, so a great place to catch your breath upon arrival.

DO note that while you will most like see many rhinos during your visit here, you will leave with absolutely zero photos of them. They do not allow photos of the rhinos to protect them from poachers.

DO make use of the camp's worthwhile spa menu. Most safari spas are lackluster, but that's not the case at Omaanda.

DON'T skip breakfast. We're getting hangry just thinking about it.

DON'T expect massive herds or epic sightings. The animals at Omaanda, mostly new arrivals, are just getting settled.

DON'T be shy to cancel a drive or two and spend the day enjoying the camp. The rooms, F&B, pool, and spa are the best parts of this experience, so you might as well.

At Omaanda, the concept goes beyond the basic, with a more wholistic approach to the safari spa and with actually talented therapists. Offerings include massage, facials, scrubs, mani-pedis, and reflexology.

Omaanda is a very interesting addition to the African safari scene. The camp itself is divine, with some of the best F&B and wellness opportunities anywhere in the bush. A few procedures and standards were yet to be fully realized during our visit, about which we offered comments and suggestions. We believe our suggestions were taken to heart. It may take a bit of time for this reserve, and this camp, to fully mature, but there is most certainly the promise of something interesting from Zannier's approach to safari. ●●●

Omaanda

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