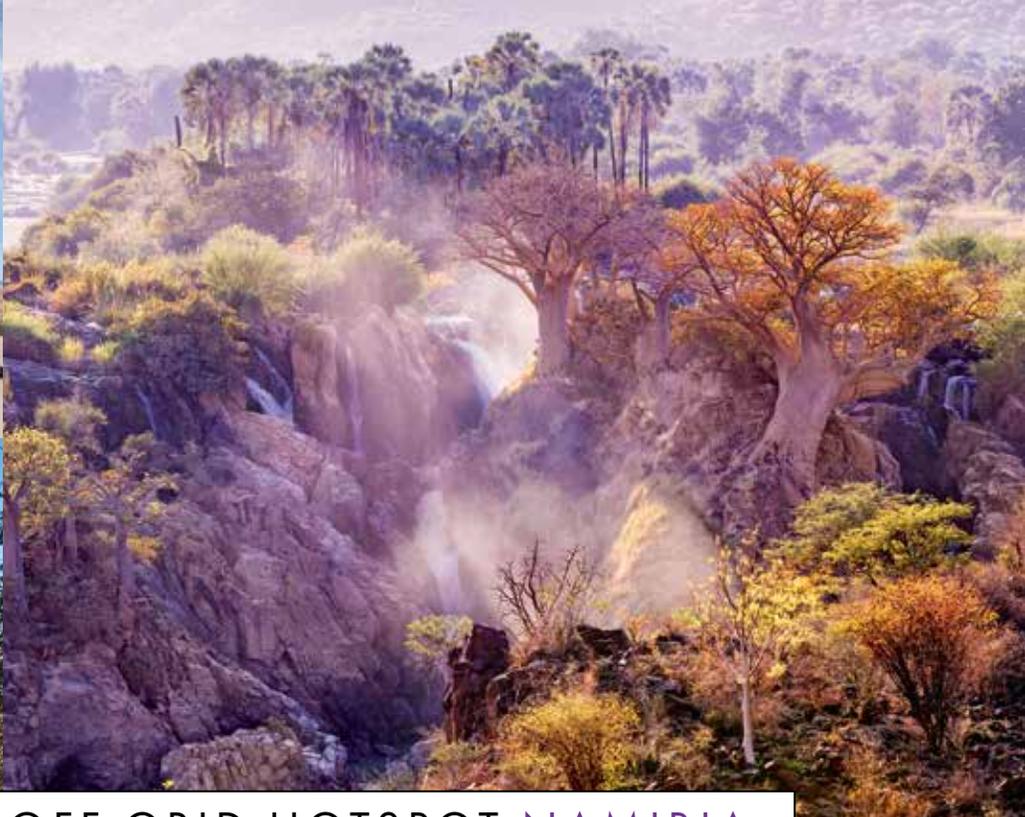




SHIPWRECK LODGE



OMAANDA

THE OFF-GRID HOTSPOT NAMIBIA

EXTRAORDINARY CAMPS ARE MOVING INTO THE WILDERNESS

‘The Namibian savannah, its simplicity and vastness, is incredibly moving,’ says Arnaud Zannier, founder of his eponymous hotel group, which will open two new sustainable-minded lodges in Namibia over the next year. There’s an otherworldliness to the landscape here: the rippling red dunes of the world’s oldest desert; the wild, sandswept coastline; the eeriness of the salt and clay pans of Sossusvlei and Deadvlei. This is one of the most thinly populated countries in the world – the stark emptiness is astonishing. The wildlife – lions, desert elephants, giraffes, cheetahs, rhinos – is incredibly well protected (more than 40 per cent of the country is under conservation management). The first hotel, Omaanda, is a collection of round thatched clay huts in the newly created Zannier Reserve, a preserved piece of land bought in collaboration with a local foundation in the countryside outside the capital, Windhoek. It was Angelina Jolie, a fan of the French hotelier’s Siem Reap hotel Phum Baitang, who suggested Zannier look to this beguilingly barren corner of Africa. (The Jolie-Pitt Foundation is also funding a sanctuary for injured rhinos and elephants near Omaanda.) Zannier’s second camp, Sonop, 10 luxury tents in the Namib desert, will launch in 2019. And it’s not just Arnaud Zannier who has been captivated by Namibia’s wilderness. There’s a pack of brilliant new outfits putting down roots here this year, from ‘lifestyle’ newcomers (roving members’ club Habitas) to classics rebuilt (Serra Cafema Camp in the remote north-west, with real eco-cred and furniture made in Windhoek’s Katutura township). Serious new safari enterprise **Natural Selection**, from Wilderness founder **Colin Bell**, also has dramatically different properties, such as **Hoanib Valley Camp**, just opened against the ochre dunes of remote Kaokoland, home to the semi-nomadic Himba people. **Shipwreck Lodge**, a dramatic design modelled on the relics of the boat wrecks scattered along the Skeleton Coast, joins it this summer. This is Africa’s most exciting destination right now. MARY HOLLAND



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HOANIB VALLEY CAMP