

Namibia 2025 Gear Checklist & Information

This is fairly comprehensive list of items you will need, some essential and some optional, and information relevant to the Namibia study abroad. However, this list is intended to accompany an orientation where all of the items are explained in more detail and questions can be answered. For some items listed, there are perfectly acceptable alternatives that are detailed in the orientation. If in doubt please contact me prior to making a purchase (dwilson@mesacc.edu).

Weather

Generally, Namibian temps in May/June are similar to Phoenix in March./Feb. May and June are the end of autumn and start of winter in Namibia. Generally the weather is beautifully warm sunny days and cool at night. It is unlikely to rain. But like anywhere, the weather can differ to what we normally expect to find. In May 2023 and May-June 2024 I wore sandals, shorts and a T-shirt (and usually a hat) during the day. In the evenings and early mornings, I sometimes put on pants and a fleece top. The only time I felt cold was on a boat excursion (optional activity) out into the ocean in Swakopmund, but they have blankets on the boat. It is sunny so I use sunscreen. FYI - It's not very "buggy" and I seldom, if ever, use insect repellent. Please remember however that the weather and how "buggy" it is, is very variable.

Luggage & Packing

I never travel with a checked bag anymore (unless it's to bring back souvenirs). I bring everything I need in my carry-on bag and personal item. Although you MUST check with your airline to find out what they allow and what they include in your ticket. I avoid checking a bag because they frequently get lost in transit and it's so nice not to have to lug around a big bag. Someone has had a bag get lost on EVERY study abroad to Africa I have run. If you pack wisely, you won't need a checked bag. But, if you decide you need to bring a checked bag, it MUST be a small one as space in the back of the 4x4s is VERY limited.

- Carry-on. Check with the airline on the weight limit & size. I use a 40L backpack as my carry-on or a smaller bag.
- Personal item. Some airlines ONLY allow a single carry-on bag which means you may need to check your carry-on.
- Luggage straps are a good idea if you check a bag or think you may have to check your carry-on bag.

Flights

You have lots of flight options. I ofte fly the route and airlines below (3 flights).

1. Phoenix or LAX to London (British Airlines or Virgin).
2. London to Johannesburg (British Airlines or Virgin).
3. Johannesburg to Windhoek (Airlink of South African Air).

Please note: Airlines change their luggage allances often and the luggage allowance varies by the class of ticket purchased. Please check the luggae alloancees. For reference, on past trips, the BA and Virgin flight allows 1 carry-on bag and a nice size personal item (which I use as my camera bag). The Airlink flight allows only one carry-on item and 2 checked items. Flights and airline policies change often, so I'll talk more about this in-person. If you want to travel with me, on my itinerary, you are of course welcome. I will keep you informed and tell you the exact itinerary and when to purchase. It's also fun to fly together. Feel free to book a return flight that returns later or has an interesting stopover for a few days.

Clothes

Try to make sure most of your clothing is not cotton or is thin cotton or a blend. Synthetic clothing dries quickly when it's wet/washed and is lighter to travel with. Including travel days, you'll be gone for approx. 4 weeks (+/- a few days). Rather than pack 4 weeks-worth of clean clothes (which is nuts), pack clothes that can be washed easily in a sink or clothing that can be worn for extended durations. Laundry facilities are extremely limited or unavailable. The last few days of the program are in Swakopmund. There are some nice restaurants so you may want to pack something nice to wear if you have space.

- Shoes:
 - Cross trainers/running/tennis shoes (I use cross-trainers) or hiking boots (light).
 - Sandals
- Socks x 6pr (ankle socks and 1 or 2 heavier pairs)
- Undies x 6pr
- Pants x 1 (2 is OK)
- Shorts x 2 (3 is OK)
- Shirts x1 long sleeve
- T-shirts x 4
- Fleece x 1
- Hat
- Towel (small or medium size. I don't bring one)
- Bathing suit (Speedos are ideal)
- Jacket/light rain shell (optional, if you feel the cold)

Notes:

Toiletries

Bring only very small amounts of liquid toiletries. If you have a carry-on bag only, TSA limits you to 100ml x3 bottles of liquids/pastes/gels. You can buy most toiletries in Windhoek after you arrive. Whatever you do, do not bring a big container of something, use some of it, and then bring it all the way back!

- Sunscreen (I usually bring)
- Toothpaste (I usually bring)
- Soap (bar) (I usually buy)
- Shampoo (I usually bring, because I bring about 50ml of Dr. Bronners)
- Toothbrush
- Medications
 - Anti-diarrhea
 - Hydrocortisone cream
 - Anti-itch/insect bite cream
 - Vitamins

- Prescription meds to last the whole time
- Anti-malarial (doxycycline is recommended). Talk to your doctor about this.
- Small first aid kit (band-aids, antiseptic, antibiotic)
- Shaving gear (I just bring a razor and use Dr. Bonners or soap)
- Deodorant (although we all stink, get used to it!)
- Insect repellent (FYI – Avoid DEET-based, they will destroy plastics). Your call. It's not usually very buggy.

Notes:

To Bring or to Buy in Namibia?

You will have the opportunity to go shopping when we arrive and in some small towns en route. I suggest you bring only small amounts of things in the toiletries list as you can purchase them in Namibia if you run out. For example, don't bring a huge bottle of your favorite shampoo.

Computer & Internet

You will need an internet enabled laptop or tablet for classwork. Some of the places we'll stay have wi-fi. Most of the time it's free, but sometimes there is a small cost or it's only available in specific locations.

- Small laptop or tablet with charger and cables
- Plug adapter (you can purchase these in Namibia)

Phone

If your phone can use a SIM card from another carrier, you can purchase a physical SIM card and airtime in Namibia (from the MTN store (Namibia cell phone carrier)). That's the cheapest option for cell/data service which is quite good. However, I once had a problem with getting my phone to work with a Nam SIM card. You can also enable your phone for international roaming. That's expensive BTW. You can also purchase a cheap phone when you arrive in Namibia. Although students have done this in the past, some of them never actually ended up using the phones). You will be able to charge USB devices from the vehicles.

- Phone and charger (charging brick and cable)
- Battery bank to charge your phone.

Notes:

Lights:

- Headlamp LED w/spare batteries
- Handheld LED w/spare batteries

Photography

The photography gear you bring will depend on your interest level and budget. I bring a large camera with multiple lenses, usually a monopod, GoPro, and accessories. However, I usually take most pictures with my cell phone. A point and shoot digital camera also works GREAT. I can talk about camera specifics in-person.

Books

I will bring a selection of guide books. But feel free to purchase your own.

Miscellaneous

- Sunglasses (a must)
- Water bottle or water bladder or an old small soda bottle (a must)
- Ziplock bags (a must)
- Notebook (a must for class notes)
- Pens/pencils (a must for class notes)
- Travel cup (a must if you like hot drinks)
- Wallet (a must or something to safely keep money and credits cards in)
- Duct tape (optional)
- Sewing kit (optional)
- Super glue (optional)
- Carabiner (optional)
- Knife (optional only in a checked bag or purchase once there)
- Journal (optional)
- Day pack - maybe also use this as the carry-on/personal item.
- Small laser pointer (optional)

Notes:

VACCINATIONS

Talk to your doctor and consult the [Center for Disease Control](#) website or the [Maricopa County Adult Immunizations clinic](#). The following are a list of shots I have gotten to travel to Namibia. I can't give medical advice, however, I can tell you what I usually do.

- Tetanus/polio/diphtheria (be up-to-date)
- Hepatitis A (Hep B?)
- Typhoid

- Meningitis

Notes:

Money Related.

You can use the ATMs to get money in the local currency. However, there are only ATM's in cities/towns and we don't spend much time in cities/towns. Make sure you call your bank before you leave and let them know you are traveling, or your card may be declined after its first use. Be sure to have at least 2 cards. Also bring US\$\$s (small new bills). Remember however, you may NOT be able to change US\$\$s outside of the cities where there is a bank or the exchange rate may be steep. Generally credit and debit cards are widely accepted.

- 1) Bring spending money. Its tough to know how much to suggest. Here are some things you may/will want to use it for: meals NOT included as group meals, drinks, snacks, junk food, optional activities (there is a HUGE range of these), souvenirs, to pay for photographs, to pay for events.
- 2) Have emergency funds in case medical care is needed. Remote clinics will only take cash.
- 3) Have at least 2 cards that you can use in an ATM, e.g., debit card and credit card. Be sure you have a PIN for both.

Notes:

Food

Group Food: We will purchase food at supermarkets for times when we are at campsites, reserves, and in the bush. This is most meals. We will cook and eat as a group on most occasions. Namibians eat lots of meat! We will too. We will BBQ a lot and eat a variety of meats including game meats and "boerwors", as well as food that is easy to cook in large amounts like pasta and stews. Breakfast will be simple such as cereal and lunch things like sandwiches. We should have fresh fruits and vegetables available as well as hot drinks, but the fresh fruit and veggies will be subject to availability. The food is very basic camp food. Availability and choice is often very limited, we can't carry large amounts of food, and our ability to store food and keep fresh food fresh is very limited. You are welcome to purchase your own foods at your own cost, BUT, storage of the group food takes priority and cooking of the group food takes priority over personal foods. The degree to which I can accommodate special food requests is extremely limited. The budget will dictate what kinds of food we purchase and to keep the cost down, we eat simply. If you wish to drink sodas, or other soft drinks, you will need to purchase these yourself. You will also need to purchase snacks and junk food yourself. We will have limited storage space, however. We will designate cooking and chore duties and share those responsibilities.

Restaurants & Cafes: When we have the time and when convenient, you will have access to local restaurants and cafes. There will be times when we will not be cooking group meals so you will be need to eat at restaurants or you may cook your own meals at the vehicle. Be prepared to have sufficient cash to purchase food.

Vehicle Etiquette

Organization: You will be responsible for keeping your vehicle clean and organized at the direction of your driver. This includes the interior, the back section, boxes of equipment and the freezer. It is difficult to dispose of trash in very rural areas, so we must try to make as little as possible. Your purchasing decisions can affect this. Your driver will coordinate keeping the vehicle organized and clean.

Rotations: We will rotate which vehicle you occupy to give you an opportunity to get to know the different drivers, and to take turns who is the front vehicle. We'll also rotate seating positions.

Music & Smoking: You can haggle, fight, and argue over music choice! However, please be respectful of the volume of the music. I generally do not like music in the vehicles as it takes away from the experience. I would prefer this to be a non-smoking trip. However, if you do smoke, please smoke away from the group, never in the vehicle or in the tents, and please dispose of cigarette butts and ash responsibly.

Sleeping Arrangements.

There will be a mix of camping in tents, rooms in hostels or B&Bs. When camping, we will use ground tents that can each accommodate 2 or 3 people each. You can usually (but not always) choose your "roommate", but we will also rotate roommates for the first few nights. You can sleep under the stars in some areas. If you DO NOT share a room or tent with a member of the opposite sex, please let me know ASAP.

Items to Trade

Think about items that will NOT generate trash and items people need to enhance their health.

- Shoes, especially kids shoes.
- Clothing
- Toothbrushes (you can buy there)
- School items

Hairdryers and Curling Irons

Just don't bring them. If you must, make sure they can operate off 220V otherwise you will NOT be able to use them. If they can run off 220V you'll need to purchase a plug adaptor. You will NOT be able to use them from the vehicle power inverters.

Charging Electronics

Namibia is 220V and uses different plugs to the US.

We'll have power inverters that convert the vehicles 12V into 120V. We'll also have a power strip for US plugs that hooks up to the power inverter. You'll use this to charge your electronics. You should plan on charging your electronics while the vehicle is being driven as much as possible. You will also have a 12V vehicle outlet from which you can charge USB devices. You will need to bring your own specialized battery chargers.

Documents

Make at least 3 copies of all of your important documents such as those listed below and keep them separate from the originals and from each other and leave one full copy with your emergency contacts. You may also want to take digital pictures of all of your documents and email them to yourself, or place on a flash drive to bring with you:

- Passport
- Medical insurance card
- Flight itinerary with confirmation #
- All credit cards front and back
- Driver's license
- Any ID cards

Notes:
