

Namibia Trip Summer 2017

Summer 2017, 33 Highlands students in year 11, 12 and 13 spent 18 days of their summer on an expedition that was extraordinary to say the least. Building up to the trip, we employed many techniques to fundraise. Some examples were busking, dog walking, sports coaching, coffee mornings and starting to work during our free time. Although it was very tiring, our hard work paid off as we can conclusively agree that the trip was worth every minute of our labour.

We all flew out together and separated into two teams, starting our expedition at opposite ends of Namibia. Five days of the trip were spent doing volunteer work in a local school: WJC Cloete Jr High School. To say the least, these days were the most mentally challenging but extremely heart-warming too. Team 1 painted the school logo at the front of the school and created a road safety scheme for the younger years. Team 2 arrived later towards the end of their trip and spent their time building a playground, painting old buildings and decorating classrooms for the children. Both groups celebrated by joining with the local community for a talent show, in which Highlands students took to the stage. Star Demi jumped over Mr Larter and Miss Lawley's heads – knocking everyone's socks off!

Following this, we ventured to Spitzkoppe: a place with some of the most stunning views. We climbed the boulders to watch the sun set whilst setting up camp and an open fire - the desert gets cold at night! After a good night's sleep wrapped up warm, we got up to see the small bushman's paradise and meet some of the local community. Sossus on Foot is home to the beautiful Dune 45 which we climbed up (some of us ran, stupidly!); extremely exhausting but the views from on top of a sand dune watching the sun rise were unbelievable! In the same desert, we did a night trek and finished this off by camping out in the open under the picturesque stars. The evening sky was so clear we could see Jupiter and Saturn! Another picturesque evening was walking down the canyon in Sesriem, not too far from the desert. Raided with baboons, we had to be careful of our belongings in Naukluft camp! One of the nicer camps since we could actually flush the toilets – such a novelty!! We had a good night's sleep there since there was 18k trek the next day, which was extremely tough terrain nevertheless rewarding views.

The R&R of this trip was spent in the beautiful Etosha National Park, home to thousands of wild animals. We were fortunate enough to see these first hand: giraffes, elephants, lions – you name it! Our evenings were spent watching the animals drinking from the watering hole – elephants, giraffe and rhino included – so close you could smell them! Whilst daytime was spent on a game drive in search of the big cats. Both groups managed to glimpse a pride of lions in their natural habitat.

To finish an extremely challenging, in a mental, emotional and physical sense, 18 days later we reunited at the Heja Lodge in Windhoek, for our last night before flying home with nothing but amazing memories!

By Jazz and Sophie, year 13

