

## To See Or Not To See

A Photographic Workshop In The NamibRand Nature Reserve, Namibia

November 2011 (exact date tbd)

With

Pål Hermansen, Photographer, Norway

Dr. Christian Goltz, Photographer and Earth System Scientist, Namibia



I met Pål some years ago at the WildPhotos in London, UK. He was one of the invited speakers. Many nature photographers described how grave everything was and some told us how to save the world. While I don't remember the title of Pål's talk, I very well remember him laughing joyfully and stating that he made images because he had many questions (to which there are no answers). And he showed many great images.

Recently, I succeeded to convince him to visit me in Namibia so that we can offer a different kind of nature photography workshop. We both are very excited about the workshop and very much look forward to your participation – we imagine a small group of passionate photographers enjoying each others company and images, exploring new ways of seeing and generally having a good time in an exceptional setting.



## The Contents

This is not a 'photo safari'. Rather, we travel as little as possible and concentrate on photography: desertscape, wildlife (mainly antelopes and birds, reptiles), nature in general, whatever else we feel like. It's about artistic nature photography (please also see Pål's statement at the end).

We ask you to bring 3 – 5 of your images (good or bad) and will use these to get to know each other and possibly identify things to work on. Early mornings and evenings we will be visiting different sites in the reserve, using open Land Rovers driven by experienced local guides. We'll have nice midday breaks to work on our pictures, take a nap or shoot even more (some real contrasty stuff). There will be daily image reviews, very much fun and most instructive.

Pål has prepared lectures on the artistic and historic aspects of (nature) photography and will show many samples (again, see his attached workshop statement). Christian will talk a little about photography in Namibia and maybe on a few technical things. There will definitely not be any lengthy lectures on technical stuff. You don't need to come to Namibia for that. Christian will be happy to answer any technical questions (dynamic range, noise, RAW, HDR, stitching, ...) at any time, however – he's worked in digital image processing even before the advent of consumer digital cameras.

It will be good if you know your gear, otherwise bring your camera manual and show the advanced guys how to break the rules! In other words, participants with any level of photographic experience are welcome. Workshop language will be English but obviously Norwegian and German are spoken as well.



You will return from this workshop with a new and broader view, with great images and with new friends.

## The Instructors



Pål Hermansen is a freelance photographer and writer since 1971 and has been published in National Geographic, GEO (including a 12 page feature on him) and many other magazines. He has also won numerous international photographic awards (including European Nature Photographer of the Year, World Press Photo, Wildlife Photographer of the Year) and published more than 20 books. He is an elected member of the Norwegian Art Photographers Association and an experienced workshop leader. Pål holds a BA (Hon) in arts and photography and, just in case, he's also a trained dentist!



Dr. Christian Goltz grew up in Namibia, left to pursue an international career as a geoscientist (Germany, Japan, USA) and finally returned to his African roots in 2008 to be a full-time photographer and writer. He worked with digital imagery long before the advent of commercially available digital cameras. His teachers include Frans Lanting and Jock Sturges. Somewhere along the way he graduated from the New York Institute of Photography. Since his return he's been surprisingly busy working for, e.g., the Namibian Government and the UN. He runs his own fine art gallery and studio in Windhoek, regularly leads workshops and does photographic consulting (yes, the horizon in my portrait picture is not straight).

## The Setting

The NamibRand Nature Reserve is the largest private nature reserve in Namibia, extending over an area of 172,200 ha. It promotes high quality, low impact tourism to be financially self-sustaining in its conservation efforts.



Virtually all facets of the Namib Desert are represented on the Reserve – sand and gravel plains and stretches of savannah alternate with ancient mountain ranges and orange vegetated dune belts – photo opportunities galore.



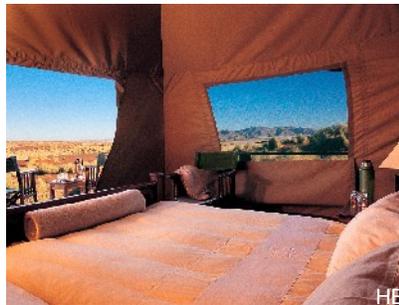
The predominant large mammals on the Reserve are oryx and springbok. Other large mammals include kudu, Hartman's and Burchell's zebra, giraffe, klipspringer, steenbok, hartebeest and baboon. Predators include leopard, cheetah, spotted and brown hyena, black-backed jackal, aardwolf, bat-eared fox, Cape fox, African wildcat, caracal and genet. To date more than 150 bird species have been identified, while work is still in progress on the inventory of rodents, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and plants.

NamibRand is quickly becoming a best kept secret among discerning photographers – see George Steinmetz' *African Air* for example but also Elle, Vogue and Brigitte paid a visit...





SB



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Exploring all this, we are likely not to meet any other people. We even have the *Wolwedans Dune Camp* (freshly upgraded) exclusively for us. A generator will supply power for a beamer, batteries can also be charged at the farm house nearby.

The weather will be warm (max 33° C, min 15° C) with a slight possibility of short rainfall (which would be great, at least the clouds). The sun will hopefully rise at about 6 am and disappear around 7:20 pm local time. We can expect moderate winds, so some dust may be flying.

Your physical condition should be reasonably good – shooting days are long, the warm weather may take its toll. We will take some small walks.

## The Itinerary

To keep things flexible for you, you may

- arrive on your own (if you fit the workshop into a larger itinerary, for example)
- take our shuttle bus from Windhoek (leaves Windhoek sometime before noon)
- take our charter flight from Windhoek (leaves Windhoek sometime before noon)

Day 1: Arrival, ice-breaker, relax

Day 2 – 6: Photography! (Usually one sunrise and one sunset session daily, additional night and noon session, lectures, image reviews)

Day 7: Departure day, possibly another morning shoot, say good-bye :-)

If you are interested in an additional Namibia tour (before or after), please inquire.

## The Prices and Small Print

The minimum number of participants is eight (8), the maximum is twelve (12).

**The following are *indicative prices*** since fuel prices might change and since we don't know the number of people for each option yet – please get in touch with Christian asap and indicate your wishes.

The cost for the workshop is N\$ 21.400.- (~ EUR 2.100.-, 8 participants), 20.500.- (~ EUR 2.020.-, 9), 19.700.- (~ EUR 1.940.-, 10), 19.100.- (~ EUR 1.880.-, 11) and 18.600.- (~ EUR 1.830.-, 12).

This includes accommodation (double sharing), food and drink incl. breakfast/lunch/dinner packs if we stay out at these times of day, transport and local guides in NamibRand, local fees, taxes, workshop fees. Not included are personal expenses like communication costs, cancellation fees, mini bar consumption and insurance. Please make sure that you have *adequate insurance* (e.g., accident, health).



The *shuttle* from Windhoek (airport or hotel in town) to NamibRand and back will be about N\$ ~~4.420.-~~ 717.- / person (~ EUR 78.-), one way, if we get 6 people or more (the total cost for a shuttle this size is N\$ ~~6.700.-~~ 4.300.- (~ EUR 435.-)). The good thing about the shuttle bus is that you will drive through great landscapes and get a feeling for where you are (going). Stops are possible.

The *charter flight* Windhoek – NamibRand will be about N\$ 2.800.- / person (~ EUR 275.-), one way. Flying is obviously faster and you might be able to get some nice aerial landscape images (the light won't be optimal, though).

If we want, we can do a *scenic flight*. From NamibRand the flight will take us south-west to Spencer Bay and the Otavi shipwreck. Next, we go north along the Namib coast to Sylvia Hill and the famous Lange Wand. After circling over Sossusvlei we head home passing more great landscape. The route might have to be altered at the pilot's discretion due to weather. The flying time is approximately 1h30. The indicative price for the flight (i.e., for the plane which can take 5 photographers including instructor) is N\$ 8.750.- (~ EUR 860.-), meaning N\$ 1.750.-/person (~ EUR 172.-) if we get the plane full. This is a special flight with our photographic needs in mind (top-wing aircraft, start before sunrise and/or afternoon, ...).



Finally, we can do a *scenic balloon flight*. Photographing the majestic landscape from a silent balloon is truly a once in a lifetime experience. The balloon will take off before sunrise in the north of NamibRand and fly, depending on wind, about ten miles in a SW direction. Recovery vehicles will pick us up wherever we land... The pilot will circle the balloon if requested so that every photographer will be in an ideal position. 2 - 7 photographers plus instructor: N\$ 6.000.- 4.000.-/person (~ EUR 405.-). If we manage more than 7 persons, we get 10% off, more than 11: 15%.



*OK, now what?* Please email Christian if you'd like to participate or have any questions. We'll go from there!

Once you've decided to join, we'd need your *deposit* of 25% on your full booking value to secure your spot. We need to have received your full payment by mid August. A reservation made on or after August 15 is to be paid in full upon receipt of confirmation. Cancellation fees are as follows: up to August 15: 25%, up to September 15: 40%, up to October 15 and 'no-show': 100%.

There are no plans to change the program. We reserve the right for changes in case of force majeure, changes due to operators and sickness, however.

Should we be unable to meet the minimum number of participants (8), we will inform those booked for the workshop no less than six weeks prior to the start of the workshop. We will then refund all monies paid save bank transfer fee.

**Resources:**

[www.namibrand.com](http://www.namibrand.com)

[www.namibrand.com/library/NAMIBRAND\\_AG\\_article\\_Dec\\_2009.pdf](http://www.namibrand.com/library/NAMIBRAND_AG_article_Dec_2009.pdf)

[www.wolwedans-namibia.com](http://www.wolwedans-namibia.com)

<http://www.namibsky.com>

**Contact:**

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Photographs: SB (Stephan Brückner), HB (Herbert Breuer), PH (Pål Hermansen), CG (Christian Goltz), NS (NamibSky)

## Workshop Statement by Pål Hermansen

Even if today it is easier than ever before to create good photographs, the development of the visual language has not been proportional to the technical evolution. The reason for this is that most people lack a visual consciousness and a consciousness about the aim for what we create. Why?

Our images are pretty much like what we have seen before. Photographs are for most people “post-it” labels for the memory. But, if your intentions are to share your experiences with other people, people that have not seen and tasted what you have, the demands are suddenly higher. The subjective memories, with all their following associations, suddenly lack, and your image has to tell the full story on its own. That’s a great challenge. If you push it even further, and want to communicate with other people by means of a visual language, if you want to enhance and stimulate people’s fantasy and encourage their associations, then the task is even more difficult.

Nature photography is a very conservative branch of photography, dominated by people that have a lot of knowledge about nature and biology, but it is typical that nearly all of them lack photographic education. This is very uncommon in the world of photography. A high percentage of press photographers and commercial photographers have a BA or MA, among art photographers nearly 100% are educated. The result of this is that most nature photographers lack knowledge about topics such as art, art history, photographic history, art philosophy etc. Therefore their photographic repertoire is very restricted. The visual language is simple and documentary, and is nurturing the colourful, spectacular image, with beautiful light and perfect sharpness. The composition is done according to the classical, romantic rules. There is of course nothing wrong with this, but the result is that nature images often are very similar to each other, they are predictable, smooth and lack resistance - and are not taken seriously by other photographers. Worst of all, no one in the nature photography business really realizes that they have missed anything - they simply have no knowledge about other kinds of photography or art.

I have been through all stages of nature photography myself, but I did something about it and completed a 4 year education in arts and photography, giving me a much broader platform for my work. Of course, nature is still my main point of interest, but photography in nature is not synonymous with nature photography. Nature photography is more an esthetical platform than a definition of the motive.

*My task is to break down the boundaries between nature photography and art photography. When the nature photograph tells the full story, shows everything exactly as it is within a predefined frame, the art image seeks the opposite – it deliberately does not show everything, it leaves more for the fantasy of the viewer, it has a philosophy behind that engages and challenges the viewer. Therefore, an art image keeps the attention of the public much longer than the perfect nature image. It’s like an old kind of chewing gum – it tastes very sweet and good during the first seconds, when the sugar layer is intact. But soon, you spit it out after the taste starts fainting. It is something else with other kinds of chewing gum, where the taste is gradually liberated into the mouth and keeps you chewing for a long time without being bored.....*

In this workshop, I try to give people a broader platform of knowledge, so that they are able to freely choose their own approach. It is fascinating that people with very little photographic experience often show faster progression than those who have been doing photography for a long time. The reason is that they are more open-minded and not restricted by all kinds of photographic rules.



North/South, Pål/Christian

