

Capt. Daley's Sea Stories

Namibia Expedition Sossusvlei, 6 of 6

24 March 2011

The name "Sossusvlei" roughly means "dead end marsh". "Vlei" is the Afrikaans word for "marsh", while "sossus" is Nama for "no return" or "dead end". Sossusvlei is a drainage basin without outflows for the ephemeral Tsauchab River. This area is characterized by high sand dunes of vivid pink-to orange color, due to a high percentage of iron in the sand and consequent oxidation processes. The oldest dunes are those of a more intense reddish color. These dunes are among the highest in the world; many of them are above 1,000 feet, the highest is nicknamed Big Daddy, and is 1,245 feet high.

Fauna in the Sossusvlei area is relatively rich. It mostly comprises small animals that can survive with little water, including a number of arthropods, small reptiles and small mammalians such as rodents or jackals. Bigger animals include oryxes, springboks and ostriches. During the flood season, migrant bird species appear along the marshes and rivers. Much of the fauna is endemic and highly adapted to the specific features of the Namib. Most notably, the Namib Desert Beetle has developed a technique for collecting water from early morning fogs through the bumps in its back.



I couldn't resist four wheeling through the desert, remembering how much fun they were in Cabo San Lucas.



Fairy Circles – Are they caused by chemicals, radiation or aliens??? Personally I found the natural radiation of rocks in the area to be the most plausible but found myself in many debates defending and explaining it. Finally I went with Aliens which is so implausible; people felt sorry for you and didn't debate it. Science isn't sure of the cause!



A springbok skull



Riding the dunes really was great fun.





No, it's not a Mars exploration team.





Another visitor on our couch