HIDDEN AFRICA

Lijiang, Yunnan, China. I'm in the midst of conducting my Hidden China II adventure when an extraordinary opportunity has suddenly materialized.

What you see above is an actual unretouched photograph, not a painting. It was taken by National Geographic photographer Franz Lanting at sunrise at the base of the world's biggest sand dune in the world's oldest desert in Africa's most spectacularly unknown country: *Namibia*.

Namibia is as big as Texas and Oklahoma together, yet only has 2 million people. The former German colony of Southwest Africa, it gained independence in 1990. While it is one of Africa's cleanest, safest, and best-run countries, it only now is beginning to be discovered by savvy international travelers as *the* place to have an African Safari like nowhere else.

Even if you have been to the Serengeti of Tanzania, the Masai Mara of Kenya, or the Okavango of Botswana, Namibia's unique beauty, wildlife, and tribes will astound you. The opportunity is this:

Unless you want to rent a car and drive thousands of kilometers yourself, stay in backpacker tents - and take a month to do so because the distances are vast - safaris in Namibia are hugely expensive. That's because to avoid those vast distances you must charter a plane to take you around the country, plus the luxury lodges are really pricey.

I have been able to arrange a safari to Namibia's most spectacular places and tribes - The Namib Desert, the Skeleton Coast, the Painted Himba Nomads, the Etosha Pan with such a profusion of wildlife it's known as Africa's Last Eden - at a stunningly low cost for a luxury private air safari: *$5850*.

What's more, the Hidden Africa Safari is at the best time of year for game viewing, after the rainy

season with the grass drying up and the wildlife congregating at the waterholes. And we can do it all in little more than one week, departing the US on Friday May 23 and arriving back in the US on Sunday June 01.

The catch is that I only have until March 15, then the opportunity goes away. And I can only take 8 TTPers.

I can't post more than a few photos with the connection I have here in China. Here's a brief summary. We start in Windhoek, Namibia's capital, and drive to the Namib Desert, the oldest in the world - 80 million years old. The Namib's gigantic Sossusvlei Dunes are the world's biggest, of an intense red-orange that magically shift colors during sunrise and sunset.

This is just an example:

Google images of "Namib Desert" and "Sossusvlei" for more.

We explore the magic dunes and take a *sunrise hot air balloon ride* over them.

Next we head for the Skeleton Coast, so named for the skeletal remains of over a thousand shipwrecks that have foundered along it. In addition to the shipwrecks, the Skeleton Coast is also

famous for having the largest colony of fur seals in the world. You'll be able to walk among them, safely on a raised walkway, in uncountable numbers. Tens of thousands of fur seals all around you, a true once-in-a-lifetime experience - on the shore as far as you can see, and swimming in the surf.

We then fly to a luxury private tented camp on the Kunene River that forms the border between Angola and Namibia. From here we venture out to visit one of Africa's most interesting and inspiring tribes, firmly intent on maintaining their unique way of life amidst the pressures of modernization: The Himbas.

The Himba will welcome us, and may even invite the ladies among us to be painted in *otjize*, a mixture of butter and red ochre that protects their skin from the sun and symbolizes life, then join in a dance that celebrates the joy of living:

After our Himba experience, we fly south for one of Africa's most spectacular wildlife areas, the Etosha Pan.

It's a huge salt pan or dry salt-encrusted lake bed surrounded by water holes that attract an enormous amount of animals. It's a haven of wildlife that's been hailed as one of Earth's "Last Edens." Here's an example:

We stay at Etosha's most luxurious lodge, Onguma Fort, which has its own 100,000 acre private game reserve. All of the "Big Five" are here in abundance - elephants, rhinos, leopards, lions, and Cape buffalo - plus cheetahs, giraffes, zebras, antelopes and gazelles... it's a wildlife wonderland:

Our time here is dedicated to enjoying and experiencing the Africa that everyone dreams of seeing. In the early morning, we may see a pride of lions on the kill, a leopard enjoying a gazelle high in a tree, cheetahs on the chase. In the late afternoon, we'll be entranced by the incredible profusion of animals at the waterholes. In the evening, we have a candlelit dinner overlooking the Onguma waterhole.

Again, Google images for "Etosha Namibia" to see what I mean.

After one last sunrise game drive, we return to Windhoek where we connect to a flight back home - or elsewhere in Africa, such as Victoria Falls or Cape Town. It's important to note that we structured this itinerary to enable you to have a life-memorable African Safari in one week - or, if you have more time, say two weeks, you have the option of visiting other extraordinary places elsewhere in southern Africa.

If you've always dreamed of going on a fabulous Africa Safari at reasonable cost, here's your chance. There isn't much time, however. Let Miko know quickly if you want to be come with me to Hidden Africa: miko@tothepointnews.com, or 703-992-4529. Miko will also email you a PDF PowerPoint with the full itinerary.

HIDDEN AFRICA DETAILS

Dates: Saturday May 24 to Saturday May 31, 2014 (depart US/home Friday May 23 - return US/home Sunday June 01)

Cost per person: $5850

Payment, Cancellation and Refund

*Payment in full - $5,850 by March 15.

*Refund of in full on the condition of a fully-paid acceptable replacement for you. Note: you may want to consider trip cancellation insurance.

Cost includes:

**All ground and air transportation, transfers, safaris and activities* as specified in the itinerary.

**All meals* (breakfast/lunch/dinner including bottled water, juice, soft drinks) from dinner Saturday May 24 to breakfast Saturday May 31.

**All accommodation* from the night of Saturday May 24 through the night of Friday May 30.

Cost does not include:

*International airfare to/from Windhoek.

*Visa fees. Namibia visa required for US citizens. Note: No South Africa visa required for visit of less than 90 days.

*Alcoholic drinks and personal expenditures, such as laundry, internet fees, communications, gratuities, etc.

Important caveat: Every effort will be made to adhere to the itinerary. Due to the vagaries of travel in this region and of adventure travel in general, the itinerary may be altered in any way necessary. Participants are expected to accept this, and to maintain a cheerful attitude on an adventure such as this.

To apply for your participation in this extraordinary adventure, please contact us immediately. Only 8 TTPers with an adventurous attitude may participate. Contact Miko: miko@tothepointnews.com ASAP!

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