



Images courtesy of Eugene Yiga

## HERE COMES THE SUN

**Eugene Yiga** goes in search of a whale but finds something even better on his three-hour sailing trip aboard a sun sail catamaran in Walvis Bay.

**T**his must be the mist rain you mentioned yesterday," I say to the tour guide as I get into the car. It's a cold, grey morning in Swakopmund and a fine drizzle hangs in the air. Never mind that it's 8am. The sun seems to be on holiday too.

"I don't know who brought this rainy weather," the tour guide says as he turns the wipers on, "Must be the people from Windhoek." Good thing I'm wearing a jacket — before it gets better, the weather will get worse.

He jokes that when they have 60mm of rain, they're referring to the distance between droplets on the windshield. But even though the lack of a drainage system can cause severe flooding in the streets — so much so that you need a 4x4 to get around — the rain brings good things too. Erwin points out the pale pink flamingos dancing in the lagoon and breeding for the first time in decades.

"We mostly have marine-based activities here," he explains as we end our 30km drive to Walvis Bay, the tourism hub with a complicated political past (and so named because the deep waters attract feeding whales). "Swimming, scuba-diving, angling,

windsurfing, and kite-surfing without the board attached to your feet. It's more adventurous that way!"

But my day won't include that kind of intensity. Instead, I'm at the Walvis Bay Yacht Club and about to board Silver Wind, a Sun Sail catamaran, to search for some creatures of the sea.

"These trips are like a game drive," explains Captain Mike. "Seals are like springboks: there are so many that your chances of seeing them are 100%. Dolphins are like lions: there's a 50% chance but you have to look closely. And whales are like elephants: there's a 20% chance you'll see one if you keep your eyes open very wide!"

Right on cue, a seal jumps on board. "Some people want to hug them and kiss them because they look cute," Captain Mike says as he hands over fish after fish. "But don't. They're wild animals."

Later, as we sail by a 100-year-old lighthouse that's now an exclusive lodge, we see an island of thousands more. "The average male seal has up to 25 wives," Captain Mike says. "Can you imagine the stress from all those mothers-in-law?"

Altogether, there are about 50 000 seals here. "They eat 7% of their body weight every single day," Captain Mike says. "So we have to hunt them before they destroy all the fish." A murmur of disapproval goes around the crowd. "But we use each part of the seal: the fur, the oil, and even the meat for pet food," Captain Mike continues. "If that bothers you, feel free to take a few thousand of them home!"

It seems that feeding the seal has attracted other creatures, this time from the air. "Pelicans must have been bikers in a previous life," Captain Mike jokes. "Just look at the way they grip the railings of the boat like someone gripping a handlebar."

I'm not sure if I believe in reincarnation but seeing the seagulls in a feeding frenzy makes me believe they must have a way of communicating. As soon as Captain Mike feeds one, the others flock in. I cover my head with my hoodie lest I end up like the Swiss man next to me with poop in his hair.

But even after the birds disperse, I keep myself wrapped up. Now that we're out of the peninsula and into the open sea, the cold wind rocks the boat and bites into my face. While the heat in central Namibia can be unbearable, the Benguela currents



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from Antarctica keep coastal temperatures at around 20°C throughout the year. Except today, when the water is 10°C or 10mm in the old language, as Captain Mike jokes.

I envy the European tourists with their layers and scarves. Rather than keep pretending I’m

not cold, I grab one of the blankets below deck and swaddle myself. It’s too cold to act like a man, which must be why the other men follow my lead and get blankets too.

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Alas, we don’t. Instead, we see massive ships, including one in the process of being built. “Our harbour is small but it’s one of the most efficient in Africa,” Captain Mike says. “And with all the construction we’re doing now, this place is going to be even busier in four years.”

Also expanding is the peninsula itself. “It’s grown two kilometres since 1950,” Captain Mike says. “That means if you take this tour in two thousand years, you’ll have to do it by bus instead of by boat!” He encourages us to make our bookings now.

The harbour is also efficient at growing oysters, a practice that Captain Mike tells us started in Lüderitz about 30 years ago and then came to Walvis Bay just over 15 years after that. One farm we see grows around 5 million oysters a year. And it happens three

times faster than anywhere else in the world.

“We’ve got the wind for oxygen and the food in the water like everywhere else,” Captain Mike says. “But the water also stays cold 95% of the year, which prevents the oysters from breeding. And because the water is eight metres deep, the baskets stay submerged and aren’t affected by the tide.”

At last, it’s time for lunch and time for us to taste what the rest of the world can’t seem to get enough of. Captain Mike and his crew bring out a tray of fresh oysters and other seafood treats. “You have to eat them Namibian style,” he says. “With lemon, black pepper, and a drop of Tabasco sauce.”

Not many people on board seem to like the oysters raw, so it’s up to me and a Latvian man to enjoy them by ourselves. “In January, you get the Rolls Royce of oysters,” he says as he slurps another one down and tosses the empty shell into the ocean from whence it came. It’s the circle of life.

We wash down our lunch with glasses of sparkling wine. And the sun’s decided to join us at last! The sea changes from pale grey to a deep green. I sit back and smile, my face feeling warm at last. Who needs dolphins and whales? Good weather is more than enough. 🌊

**To book a sailing excursion with Sun Sail Catamaran, call +264 81 124 5045, email [fun@mweb.com.na](mailto:fun@mweb.com.na), or visit [www.sailnamibia.com](http://www.sailnamibia.com)**