

Adventure race Expedition Africa to put spotlight on Namaqua West Coast

Preparations for Adventure Racing World Series' Expedition Africa, which officially launched in Vanrhynsdorp recently and will bring one of the world's most prominent adventure races to South Africa's Namaqua West Coast, have moved into overdrive. When competitors line up for the start of Expedition Africa Namaqua West Coast in May next year, global attention will be focused on a region known for its wilderness and hospitality.

The race



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The event will see teams of athletes at their peak race unsupported across more than 500km of arduous terrain, using disciplines including navigation, trekking, MTB, kayaking and mountaineering.

Expedition Africa is one of a series of premier qualifier events held annually around the world. The entrants comprise teams of four individuals – top endurance athletes who compete for a chance to represent their country at the sport's pinnacle showdown, the Adventure Race World Championship. Each series qualifier devises a unique course to test the teams, which comprise men and women, for up to five days of non-stop racing. Courses are always kept secret until just before the start. The Adventure Race World Championship has defined the sport of adventure racing and crowned the world's top adventure racing teams since 2001.

Expedition Africa is followed by hundreds of thousands of outdoor and adventure racing enthusiasts and many more who track the Adventure Race World Championship. In addition, interest is growing at a substantial rate – between 2016 and this year, when Expedition Africa covered the Baviaans and Kouga regions of the Eastern Cape, publicity exposure tripled. Expedition Africa Baviaans saw the Swedish Skylotec Adventure team first to successfully cover the 514km, finishing in a time of just over 80 hours. The teams started at Cape St Francis and showcased amongst others the Addo Elephant Park as well as the Baviaanskloof World Heritage Site. The community project beneficiary for the event was seabird NPO SANCCOB.

Adventure tourism growing

Adventure tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Western Cape and a focus of local and provincial government.

“We are tremendously excited to have been selected to host Expedition Africa,” says Namaqua West Coast tourism manager Monika de Jager. “It speaks volumes about the appeal of our region locally and internationally. At the same time, it creates much-needed, long-term economic opportunities for our local community thanks to the significant interest the event generates and ensuing visitors it will bring.”

One of the Cape’s most unique travel destinations, the Namaqua West Coast in the Matzikama area is a place of raw, iconic beauty and diverse contrast, where a tradition of wholesome generosity remains alive in old fishing and farming communities. Situated a mere 2,5 hours north of Cape Town, the region is home to the world-famous blooms of Namaqualand, swathes of prized wine vineyards, the vast plains of the Knersvlakte, and fertile river valleys that wind through arid landscapes. Its stark and rugged coastline comprises kilometres of solitary beaches, undulating dunes and *sandveld* while the interior highlands soar in the mountain ranges of the Gifberg and Maskamberg. Long the open-secret among lovers of the great outdoors, Namaqua West Coast offers some of the most outstanding and challenging landscapes for every activity, from mountaineering to hiking, 4x4 to trail-running.

Wonderful surprise

“The Namaqua West Coast was exactly what we sought in a venue,” says Expedition Africa organiser Heidi Muller. “Not only breathtakingly beautiful and wild, it has that essential element we look for in each potential course: wonderful surprise. It is truly an undiscovered gem that easily wins over every first-time visitor and we know, will blow away race competitors.” The organisers have spent weeks exploring the region to formulate the course, which will end in Vanrhynsdorp, home of Expedition Africa Namaqua West Coast 2018 chief venue sponsor Letsatsi Lodge. The occasion will put the small village centre stage with the convergence of international media, race support teams and observers.

Schools across the region will also share in the benefits as part of the event's community investment contribution. A portion of the fees from every Expedition Africa race is donated to local community initiatives. The beneficiaries in 2018 will be local schools.

Expedition Africa Namaqua West Coast takes place from 18-27 May 2018, presented by Namaqua West Coast Tourism in association with the main sponsor, Tronox and other stakeholders Matzikama municipality, Namaqua Wines, Klawer Cellars, Lutzville Vineyards, Letsatsi Lodge and vehicle sponsor Brand Nissan.

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