



Press Release: Reclassification of the West Etosha road between Galton Gate to M'Bari (the Galton Gate Route) from a "Restricted Use" Tourism Zone to an "Open Access" Tourism Zone

In accordance with the goals of Vision 2030 and the mission of the **Ministry of Environment and Tourism**, a series of initiatives are currently being undertaken by the Ministry to sustainably enhance tourism growth in Namibia – with specific focus on benefiting rural community households. The Ministry, through funding by the American Government represented by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, has achieved one such initiative with the reclassification of the West Etosha road between Galton Gate to M'Bari (the Galton Gate Route) from a "Restricted Use" Tourism Zone to an "Open Access" Tourism Zone on **28 February 2014**.

Prior to this reclassification, the privilege of entry and exit via this Western gate has been confined to tourists travelling with permit holding tour operators – and more recently – to Dolomite Camp's overnight guests.

By declaring the Galton Gate Route an "Open Access" Tourism Zone, the way has effectively been paved for the opening of the Galton Gate and the associated West Etosha route to self-drive tourists – otherwise known as fully independent travelers.

The envisaged positive outcome of this initiative is the creation of a number of new tourist routes, circuits, linkages and lodge opportunities both inside and outside ENP – and due to Galton Gate's strategic location - increased socio-economic benefits to the many conservancies and other rural communities located to the West and north of the park.

To implement this initiative, the Ministry of Environment & Tourism, with the assistance of Millennium Challenge Account Namibia, is pleased to announce that Galton Gate and the associated route through West Etosha is open to all tourists with effect from **28 February 2014**.

Interesting features and attractions along this route are:

- Three distinct ecological landscape types
 - quartzite & dolomite hills
 - flat landscape dominated by shrub mopane vegetation
 - flat landscape with mixed mopane tree savanna, steppe grassland & pan edge grasslands
- High concentrations of game around Renostervlei and Ozonjuitji-M'Bari waterholes – especially in the dry winter months (May – November)
- The co-existence of Hartman's Mountain Zebra (*Equus equus hartmannae*) and Burchell's Plains Zebra (*Equus equus burchelli*) - the only route in Etosha where these two species can be viewed together. (Burchell's or plains zebra have a faint 'shadow' stripe, which is absent in their cousin, the mountain zebra.)
- Lion and elephant are frequently seen at the waterholes along the route
- Some of Namibia's endemic birds including the White-tailed Shrike, Damaraland Hornbill, Carp's Tit and Rockrunner
- The globally threatened Lapped-faced Vultures - the largest and most dominant of the vultures – commonly seen at the waterholes