

FINNISH MISSIONARY SOCIETY · NAMIBIA HERITAGE COLLECTION

Following the Finnish Missionary Footsteps

*From the Coast of Walvis Bay to the Heart of Ovamboland
Tracing a historic journey that began in 1867*

7

DAYS · 6 NIGHTS

1,350+

KM OF HISTORY

1867

THE YEAR IT BEGAN

5

MISSION STATIONS

HERITAGE TOURISM

MISSIONARY HISTORY

CULTURAL JOURNEY

Start: Windhoek International Airport / Any site in Namibia · End: Oniipa / Ondangwa Airport

— PACKAGE OVERVIEW —

A Journey Written in Faith, Courage & Devotion

On 18 September 1867, a small group of Finnish missionaries departed their homeland — not knowing what lay ahead on the plains of Southern Africa.

This remarkable 7-day heritage journey traces one of the most extraordinary episodes in the spiritual history of Southern Africa. Beginning in Windhoek and ending in the historic mission heartland of northern Namibia, guests follow the precise footsteps of the Finnish Missionary Society pioneers who made their arduous way from the coast to Ovamboland.

The Finnish missionaries who set sail on 18 September 1867 arrived in Southern Africa on 31 December 1868, stepping ashore at Walvis Bay after a long sea voyage via the Cape. From there, they pressed inland through harsh and unfamiliar terrain — through Otjimbingwe, on to Omaruru, and ultimately northward to Omandongo, where the missionary party separated to establish their first stations.

This journey is designed for cultural tourists, heritage travellers, church groups, educational expeditions, Finnish visitors tracing their nation's missionary legacy, historians, and genealogy travellers seeking the roots of faith planted in Namibian soil.

— JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS —

- ◆ Walvis Bay — the missionaries' first steps on Namibian soil (31 December 1868)
- ◆ Otjimbingwe — a year of preparation, language study and prayer
- ◆ Omaruru — the gateway to the north
- ◆ Omandongo — where the mission party separated
- ◆ Olukonda — the first and most significant station (established 1871)
- ◆ Oniipa — the station that closed and was reborn (established 1872, re-established ~14 years later)
- ◆ Community interaction with Oshiwambo heritage keepers
- ◆ Museum visits, heritage interpretation and guided storytelling throughout

— THE HISTORIC ROUTE —

Route Distances — From Sea to Savannah

All distances are approximate road distances. The historic missionaries travelled on foot and by wagon across terrain that is now served by tarred and gravel roads.

FROM		TO	DISTANCE	HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
Windhoek	→	Walvis Bay	~396 km	<i>Modern entry to the missionaries' first Namibian shore</i>
Walvis Bay	→	Otjimbingwe	~270 km	<i>First inland journey — one year's preparation here</i>
Otjimbingwe	→	Omaruru	~125 km	<i>Northward advance toward Ovamboland</i>
Omaruru	→	Omandongo	~552 km	<i>The pivotal parting point of the mission group</i>
Omandongo	→	Olukonda	~30 km	<i>The founding journey to the first great mission station</i>
Olukonda	→	Oniipa	~7 km	<i>Second station — closed, then reborn 14 years later</i>
TOTAL: Windhoek to Oniipa	→		~1380 km	<i>A journey of faith across Namibia's history</i>

— HISTORICAL NARRATIVE —

The Story Behind the Journey

The Finnish Missionary Society was founded in Turku, Finland in 1859. Within eight years, its first missionaries were dispatched to Africa. Their journey was long, the conditions extreme, and their faith absolute.

“On 18 September 1867, the Finnish missionaries departed from their homeland, beginning a voyage that would take them around the Cape and up the Atlantic coast to the harbour at Walvis Bay, arriving on the last day of 1868.”

Finnish Missionary Society · Historical Record · 1867–1868

SEA VOYAGE · 1867–1868

Across the Oceans

The Finnish missionaries sailed by sea, rounding the Cape of Good Hope before turning northward up the Atlantic coast. They arrived in Southern Africa on 31 December 1868 — the final hours of the year. Their first steps on Namibian soil were taken at Walvis Bay, a harbour town that would mark the beginning of an inland odyssey.

OTJIMBINGWE · 1869

A Year of Preparation

From Walvis Bay, the missionaries travelled inland to Otjimbingwe, then an established mission centre. Here they spent approximately one year learning the land, its languages, and its peoples preparing themselves spiritually and practically for the great northward advance toward Ovamboland.

OMANDONGO · 1870

The Parting of Ways

After passing through Omaruru, the missionaries reached Omandongo and here their paths divided. Some went to establish a station at Elim, others to Okahao, and others pressed on toward what would become Olukonda. The stations at Elim and Okahao lasted only about two years, due to disagreements with local kings, and the missionaries ultimately regrouped at Olukonda.

OLUKONDA · 1871

The Enduring Station

Officially established in 1871, Olukonda became the most significant and enduring of the early Finnish mission stations in Ovamboland. It was here that the foundations of education, healthcare, and Christian community were laid a legacy that remains visible and living to this day.

ONIIPA · 1872 & BEYOND

Closed, Then Reborn

Oniipa mission station was established in 1872, the year following Olukonda. Yet within approximately two years, the work there ceased and the missionaries returned to Olukonda. It was only some fourteen years later that Oniipa was re-established beginning a new chapter that would grow into one of Ovamboland's most important mission centres.

— DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY —

Seven Days of Discovery

DAY 1 WINDHOEK

Arrival & Orientation in the Capital

Guests arrive at Windhoek Hosea Kutako International Airport and transfer to central accommodation. The afternoon is dedicated to an orientation session introducing the history, context and spiritual significance of the Finnish Missionary Society's work in Namibia. Dinner is hosted at a local restaurant with an introduction to Namibian cuisine and a welcome briefing by your heritage guide.

Historical Orientation Presentation National Archives Visit Welcome Dinner City Photography

DAY 2 WINDHOEK → WALVIS BAY (~396 KM)

To the Shore Where History Began

An early departure westward along the B2, through the dramatic Khomas Highland escarpment and across the Namib Desert plains. Arrive at Walvis Bay the very harbour where the Finnish missionaries first set foot on Namibian soil on 31 December 1868. A guided historical walk explores the harbour front. Afternoon visit to the Walvis Bay Museum. Overnight at a coastal accommodation.

1868 Landing Site Walvis Bay Museum Harbour Heritage Walk Coastal Photography

DAY 3 WALVIS BAY → OTJIMBINGWE (~270 KM)

The Inland Journey & The Year of Waiting

Following the path the missionaries took inland, the tour heads eastward through the Namib-Naukluft landscape to Otjimbingwe where the Finnish missionaries based themselves for approximately one year before continuing northward. Visit the historic church ruins, the old mission house and cemetery. A guide narrates the story of the missionaries' year of learning, language study and preparation.

Mission Ruins 1869 Heritage Cemetery Visit Church Ruins Photography Community Engagement

DAY 4 OTJIMBINGWE → OMARURU → TSUMEB DISTRICT (~680 KM)

Through the Gateway North — To the Parting of Ways

Continuing northward through Omaruru before pressing on to the pivotal location of Omandongo, where the Finnish missionary group separated. In Omaruru, visit the historic Christ Church. Overnight at a heritage guesthouse at Tsumeb–Otavi District.

[Omaruru Church Visit](#) [Sunset Gathering](#) [Archival Readings](#)

DAY 5 TSUMEB - OMANDONGO → ELIM & OKAHAO (~180 KM LOOP)

The Stations That Were Lost — Elim & Okahao

A dedicated day visiting the sites of Elim and Okahao, two mission stations established by the Finnish missionaries after the group separated at Omandongo, each lasting only about two years due to disagreements with local kings. Heritage interpretation at both sites. The day ends with a journey toward Olukonda. Overnight at Oniipa guesthouse in northern Namibia.

[Elim Station Site](#) [Okahao Station Site](#) [Rural Ovamboland Photography](#)

DAY 6 OLUKONDA — FULL DAY

Olukonda 1871 — Where It All Came Together

A full day dedicated entirely to Olukonda the most significant early Finnish mission station in Ovamboland, officially established in 1871. Guided tour of the historic mission buildings, the Nakambale Museum, and the remarkable pioneer homestead of missionary Martti Rautanen. Afternoon community engagement, a craft and cultural exchange with local Oshiwambo artisans. Evening at Oniipa Guesthouse.

[Nakambale Museum Tour](#) [1871 Pioneer Homestead](#) [Oshiwambo Craft Exchange](#)

DAY 7 ONIIPA — FINAL DAY

Oniipa 1872 — Closed, Remembered, Renewed

The journey concludes at Oniipa established in 1872, closed approximately two years later, and re-established some fourteen years on. Visit the Oniipa medical museum, the historic print works, and the community church. A final heritage gathering brings together guests, local church leaders and community representatives for a reflection on the journey undertaken. Departure from Ondangwa Airport or option to return to Windhoek.

[Oniipa Medical Museum](#) [Historic Print Works](#) [Community Reflection Gathering](#) [Departure](#)

— HERITAGE SITES —

The Stations of the Finnish Mission

ARRIVAL · 31 DECEMBER 1868

Walvis Bay

The coastal harbour where the Finnish missionaries first set foot on Namibian soil after their long sea voyage from Finland via the Cape. The starting point of everything that followed.

Historic Landing Site

BASE CAMP · 1869

Otjimbingwe

The missionaries remained here for approximately one year, preparing for their northward journey. One of Namibia's most historically significant early mission sites, with ruins and a cemetery that speak powerfully to this pivotal period.

Historic Mission Site

PIVOTAL CROSSROADS · 1870

Omandongo

The place where the Finnish missionary group divided — some to Elim, others to Okahao, others pressing on toward Olukonda. A site of immense historical and spiritual significance.

Historic Division Site

ESTABLISHED · ABANDONED AFTER ~2 YEARS

Elim

A mission station established after the separation at Omandongo. After approximately two years, disagreements with the local king led to closure. A story of complexity and resilience.

Historic Site

ESTABLISHED · ABANDONED AFTER ~2 YEARS

Okahao

Like Elim, Okahao was abandoned after disagreements with the local king. The missionaries eventually concentrated their efforts at Olukonda, where the mission found its enduring home.

Historic Site

ESTABLISHED 1871 — THE HEART OF THE MISSION

Olukonda

The most significant early Finnish mission station in Ovamboland. Home to the Nakambale Museum and the beautifully preserved pioneer homestead of Martti Rautanen. A living heritage site of extraordinary importance.

Active Heritage Site

EST. 1872 · CLOSED · RE-ESTABLISHED ~14 YEARS LATER

Oniipa

Founded in 1872, closed after approximately two years, and later re-established to become one of northern Namibia's most enduring mission centres. Home to the historic Oniipa printing press and a thriving congregation.

Living Mission Centre

— WHY THIS JOURNEY MATTERS —

Six Reasons This Journey Is Irreplaceable

A Finnish National Legacy

The Finnish Missionary Society's work in Namibia represents one of Finland's most enduring contributions to the world. For Finnish visitors, this journey is a profound connection to national history and identity ancestors who crossed oceans for something greater than themselves.

The Birth of Written Oshiwambo

The Finnish missionaries at Olukonda were responsible for creating the first written form of the Oshiwambo language translating scripture, creating literacy, and laying the foundations for a literate Ovambo society. This is an irreversible gift to a culture.

Healthcare & Education Roots

Hospitals, schools and community institutions in northern Namibia trace their origins directly to the Finnish mission stations on this route. To walk this path is to understand how a small group of Finns changed a society's trajectory for generations.

A Living Relationship

The relationship between Finland and Namibia is not merely historical. It lives on in church partnerships, educational exchanges and development links. This journey honours and deepens that living relationship.

Genealogy & Family Research

For descendants of Finnish missionaries, archival records at Olukonda, Oniipa and in Finnish collections provide extraordinary genealogical depth. Many visitors discover letters, photographs and documents connected to their own family histories.

A Journey of Spiritual Depth

For church groups, pastors and theology students, this journey offers a rare opportunity to stand where history-changing faith decisions were made and to experience the living fruits of that faith in the churches and communities of northern Namibia today.

— TRADE INFORMATION SHEET —

Package Inclusions & Trade Details

INCLUSIONS	EXCLUSIONS
✓ 6 nights' accommodation (heritage guesthouses / lodges)	✗ International flights to/from Namibia
✓ Daily breakfast; selected lunches and dinners	✗ Namibia visa fees (where applicable)
✓ All ground transfers in air-conditioned vehicle	✗ Travel and health insurance
✓ Dedicated English-speaking heritage guide throughout	✗ Personal spending, gifts and souvenirs
✓ Onandjokwe Medical Museum guided tour - Oniipa	✗ Alcoholic beverages (unless specified)
✓ All heritage site entrance fees and museum visits	✗ Optional add-on activities
✓ Nakambale Museum guided tour — Olukonda	✗ Gratuities for guides and drivers
✓ Community engagement	✗ Ondangwa–Windhoek return flight (optional add-on)
✓ Historical briefing book and route map	✗ Meals not listed in inclusions

— TARGET MARKETS —

- ◆ Finnish heritage and genealogy travellers
- ◆ Scandinavian cultural tourism groups
- ◆ International church groups and pilgrimages
- ◆ Theology students and seminary groups
- ◆ University history and anthropology departments
- ◆ Heritage and cultural tourism specialists
- ◆ Namibian diaspora and family history researchers
- ◆ Educational tour operators (FIT and GIT)
- ◆ Religious travel agencies
- ◆ Luxury heritage travellers aged 45–75

— PRICING —

CATEGORY	SELLING PRICE (USD PP)
Solo Traveller (FIT)	USD 3,200
Couple / Pair	USD 2,600 per person
Small Group (6–10 pax)	USD 2,200 per person
Church / Educational Group (10–20 pax)	USD 1,800 per person
Genealogy Research Add-on	USD 350 per person
High Season Supplement (Jun–Aug)	+ 15%

All prices are per person twin-share basis and exclude international flights and visa fees. Best season: April to October.

