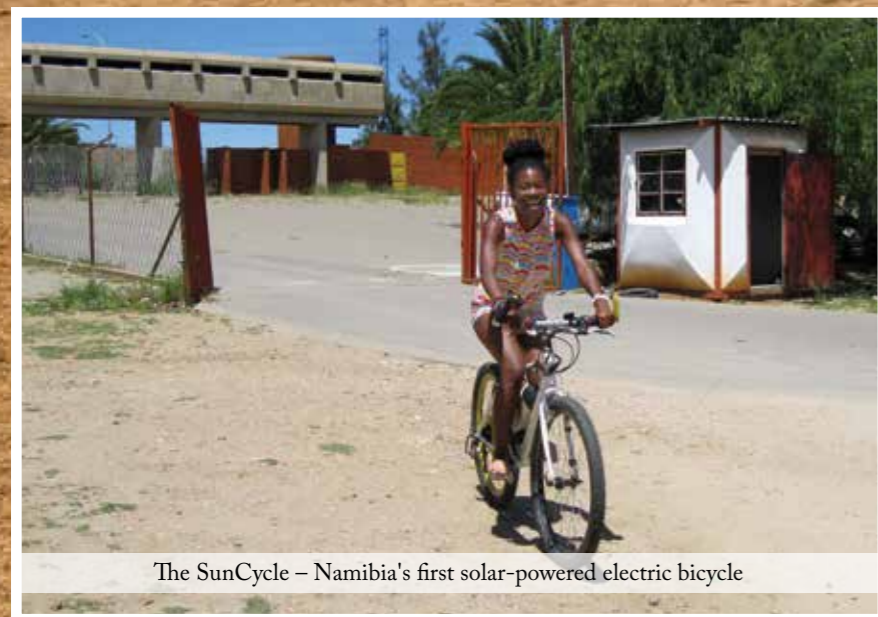


CYCLING WITH THE SUN

Text & Photographs Marita van Rooyen

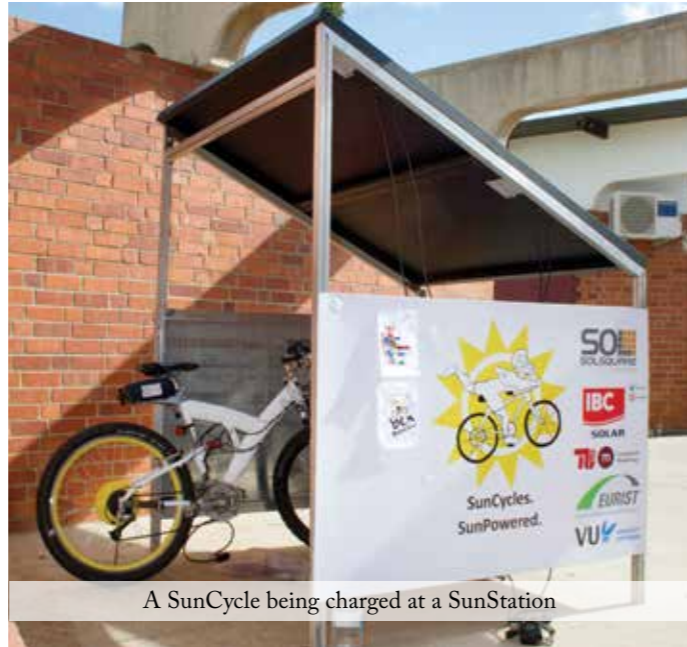


The SunCycle – Namibia's first solar-powered electric bicycle

Namibia is a sunny country. It proudly boasts at least 360 days of warm and wonderful weather – an attribute that makes it an appealing destination for many travellers, especially those from colder corners of the globe.



Because every minute counts.



A SunCycle being charged at a SunStation

Every year thousands of sun-seeking, vitamin-A-hungry bodies flock to Namibia's open spaces to soak up the heat and enjoy action-packed days of everlasting outdoor adventures (because, yes, this is what you do in sunny weather). And there are plenty of fresh air activities to keep the explorer busy: from hiking and horse riding, ballooning and skydiving, to craft collecting and birdwatching, canoeing and dune boarding. Dream of an activity that will have you grabbing for a good layer of sun protection, and you'll find it here.

But now there is another way to fully utilise the energy of the sun while admiring blue skies and an intriguing natural environment. The SunCycle – Namibia's first and only solar-powered electric bicycle – provides the option to see the country on two wheels, compliments of the pure energy from the sun.

As a concept that uses our biggest natural resource for a clean and sustainable way of transport, SunCycles Namibia offers thrill-seekers and environmentally conscious travellers an extra twist to their Namibian experience. With the wind in your hair and a permanent grin on your face, it makes steep hills comfortable to conquer, longer distances easier to cover, while still giving your legs a good dose of exercise as an added bonus (see the box for even more benefits).

The global e-mobility boom points towards a shift to cleaner transport – and Namibia is right on par!

SunCycles Namibia is a social enterprise – founded by Marita van Rooyen and Bernhard Walther – with e-bikes designed and built in Namibia, by Namibians and for Namibian travelling conditions. Dedicated to sustainable mobility and renewable energy, the team retrofits bicycle frames with electric engines and batteries, powered through photovoltaic systems. This superb combination makes visits to local attractions completely CO2 neutral and allows for guilt-free sun soaking in a multitude of ways. And no need to worry that you might be caught in the

handful of not-so-sunny days: the battery can of course still be recharged with conventional power, but yes, then it's not so planet-friendly anymore, although still a thousand times better for your conscience than doing a game drive on a fuel guzzler.

Further benefits of solar cycling include the fact that you have an alternative power supply in off-grid areas, as modern battery technology provides options to recharge and power USB applications, LED lights and small electric gadgets. This not only allows travellers to use a light for unearthing the bottle of red wine under otherwise pitch-black skies, but also gives local users an alternative transport option to the dominating taxi, plus opportunities for new business initiatives – mobile internet cafés, delivery services, cell phone recharge... the list is endless.

With a strong focus on bicycle empowerment and social upliftment, the SunCycles team operates in partnership with the local non-profit organisation Namibia Physically Active Youth to provide tools, know-how and unique skills to adolescents, working together to create a more enjoyable – and even sunnier – future. And keeping up with trends and the latest technology, they are constantly testing new engines, batteries, bicycle frames and solar systems best suited for local conditions.

So why not make your Namibian journey a green one and do some cycling with the sun? Just be warned that the possibility of onlookers shouting Jimi Hendrix lyrics as comments does exist. "There goes Ezy, Ezy Ryder, riding down the highway of desire, he says the free wind takes him higher..." Smooth sailing on solar-powered pedals indeed.

Don't forget: Namibia is not only a solar Mecca, it is also an adventurer's paradise. We recommend spots of unspoiled rugged nature – like the Spitzkoppe – to take the SunCycle for a spin. Or if you prefer slow cruises past a plethora of eye-catchers, try the self-guided Windhoek city route (see www.travelnewsnamibia.com for more) with ample pit stops and souvenir grabbing opportunities in between.

For more information on SunCycles Namibia and solar-powered sightseeing experiences visit www.suncycles-namibia.org. TNN

BENEFITS OF SOLAR CYCLING

1. Breathe the freshest air, feel the sun on your skin
2. Explore new places and spend more time in nature
3. Environmentally friendly
4. Have the wind in your hair without the sweat down your back
5. Easy uphill
6. Cycle for longer, meditate on the go
7. Travel further, see more
8. Easier to escape from a dangerous situation (lions are lurking)
9. Get a natural high
10. Play your part in creating a better future!

YOUR NAMIBIAN JOURNEY

Sun Karros

DAAN VILJOEN
WINDHOEK



Sun Karros Daan Viljoen is a stylish yet relaxed lodge a mere 20km from Windhoek. Located inside the Daan Viljoen Game Park a perfect start or end destination for your safari.

We offer overnight options to all nature enthusiasts be it on a comfortable camp site for the outdoor adventurer or in a modern stylish chalet for the nature lover enjoying the fine comforts in life.

A visit to the Daan Viljoen Game Park is a must when passing through Windhoek. Day visitors welcome to visit our Boma Restaurant.

Central Reservation Office: +264 833 232 444

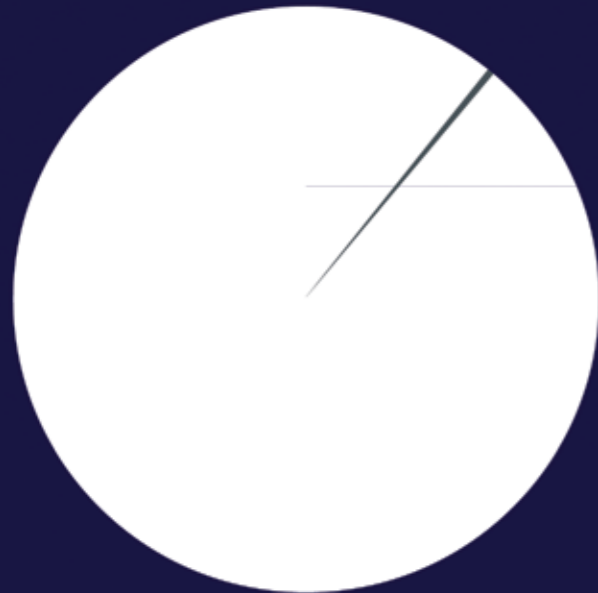
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