

Namibia 2011

Central Namibia

Leg details

Date June 22 - July 5, 2011

Leg Windhoek - Kuiseb Pass - Walvis Bay - Swakopmund - Messum Crater - Ugab River (White Lady Lodge) - Karibib - Bosua Pass - Windhoek

PDF



Leg map (click to enlarge in separate window)



Windhoek is not the worst place to be stuck and having to wait for a leaking yoke and broken down fridge to be repaired. Finding the right places to have the repairs done is probably the bigger issue Windhoek is not Perth!!

But due to this delay we will not manage to travel through Namibia in the time we have until our visa expires! This means that in addition to having the repairs done we also have to find out how a visa is extended

On Thursday, June 22, our first stop is the 4x4 Off-Road Centre in the Industrial Estate South in **Windhoek**. The very nice German gentleman cannot help us with our problems but he gives us useful information and some good addresses. Soon we have a working fridge again and are on the way to the Namib Truck Centre. We are lucky as they will have time for us tomorrow at 8 AM. Ruedi also wants them to have a look at the rear brake which locks up too quickly and which is not adjustable anymore.

Next is the Department of Home Affairs to check if we can extend our Namibian visas. Because we are so inexperienced with regards of visas we had not asked for how long we can stay in Namibia at the border post, we had just written 1 month and the official had given us 5 weeks which is never enough for what we want to see and the speed we want to travel.

So after lunch we check out what we have to do. According to the info given we should use counter 10 but it looks closed, there is nobody at the counter and also nobody is queuing up. So we get into the queue at counter 9 and wait and wait and wait A man comes past and when asked informs us that the counter should be open this afternoon. So we wait a bit longer with all the other foreigners. It is quite funny, each of them has a bit of information, how much it costs, where to pay, etc. etc. but nobody has the full picture.

After waiting for one hour without the counter being attended by anybody Ruedi heads over to the information desk. Soon he comes back with the some application forms that we need for the visa extension. As still nothing is moving at counter 9 we decide to head back to the caravan park, fill in the forms there and try again tomorrow morning. At the camp we check our options: should we go through the hassle of extending the visas or not? We don't feel like rushing through Namibia so Susi will have to take care of the extensions tomorrow while Ruedi has the OKA fixed. Another lesson learned: Ask first regarding the possible length of visas before you fill in forms!

On Friday morning we leave the camp early to beat the rush hour. Even though Windhoek is no too large (approx. 300'000 inhabitants) the rush hour gets busy with bakkies with people on the tray-back, taxis, etc. etc. We reach the Namib Truck Centre just before 7 AM which gives us a lot of time for breakfast.



The area is busy with street kitchens. BBQ-grills are "installed" on shopping trolleys and sausages and meet are grilled on it and served with a bread roll. Even though it looks good we don't trust our stomachs to like it too much and stick to our muesli

Soon the owners of the Namib Truck Centre, Kai Oestlund and his wife Karin, arrive and thing really get moving. As Susi has to go to the Department of Home Affairs she asks Kai if taking taxis is safe in Windhoek. Kai does not think so and organises that Susi is driven by one of his staff into town for her next try to extend the visas.

The place looks different to yesterday afternoon. Not only are the queues much longer but there are people serving at all windows and the place is very busy. Even counter 10 is attended today and there are only 3 people queuing there. Soon our form is checked so Susi can go and pay for it. At the window of the cashier a paper advises that photocopies should be taken of all receipts and forms before they are handed in. Good idea.

They even tell you where the next photocopier is! A few minutes later all is handed in and Susi gets the info that she can pick up the passports with the new visa on Tuesday in just two working days. Wow! That is quick!

Kai picks Susi up again. Even though it is only a few minutes from the Namib Truck Centre to the Department of Home Affairs this service is very much appreciated. Thanks Kai!



In the meantime work has started on the OKA. The originally installed cheap seal of the yoke is too loose and leaks so it has to be replaced. According to BAE the seal that should have been installed is a Viton seal, but is an uncommon brand in Namibia and is also not a standard size for trucks used in Namibia ... which means that it is not available in Namibia

We can either have a new one sent from South Africa by the OKA dealer Piet Kleynhans or use a new seal of a different brand. The seals Ruedi has in his spares (all bought from OKA) are not of good quality either. Finally the already installed seal gets slightly modified and is reinstalled.

The break diversion valve installed in Melbourne was for air brakes and not for hydraulic brakes. The seal is destroyed and the valve needs to be exchanged. That means that the breaks will have to be bled afterwards. That turns out to be a major hassle as the mechanics cannot get the air out of the hydraulic system. Time flies and as it is Friday things get a bit hectic but by 5 PM we are ready to roll. Even so the brakes work now fine, we have now a constant brake failure alarm. Ruedi will have to find the reason within the next few days.

The last action Kai does to all vehicles he has had in his Truck shop is washing them. So the OKA gets the strange feeling of being washed this usually only happens for quarantine or shipping purposes

Ruedi has also asked Kai for some electrical switches and plugs he requires to complete some other repairs.

One of them is for the light.

The plug there had "cooked" itself to destruction.

But Kai just looks at Ruedi and means that in Namibia if something is not standard truck stuff you can forget it, you won't get it.

Kai's recommendation is to solder the wires together and fix it once we are in Europe.

But he gives Ruedi directions on where to find the largest auto-electrician in town where he might be lucky.

Then we head back to the Arebush Caravan Park as we don't feel like driving another 20 km in the dark to find another caravan park that will be done tomorrow.

On Saturday morning it is shopping time.

Susi has read in the guide book that there is a large Mall with a new modern wing.

So we let the GPS show us how to get there.

This is really the only way to get around these towns where one never knows which roads are open or closed or if a part of town is in between that one does not really wants to cross the GPS just recalculates and one is on its way again.

As it is still early there is plenty of good parking available at the shopping mall.

The Maerua Mall is large and besides a Checkers has a SuperSPAR and the SuperSPAR could well be placed somewhere in Germany!

It has all the goodies we know from a well-stocked food store in Switzerland / Germany:

The whole selection of Dr. Oetker products, Lübecker Marzipan, Swiss Lindt chocolate, beautiful meats and sausages, breads, etc., etc., etc.

When we come back every single parking spot has been taken and it is quite tricky to get out of the parking because of all the cars waiting for empty spots. But as usual they respect the size of the OKA and give way

We head through town and look for some auto-electrical parts but without success as predicted by Kai.

So we leave town and head to the Trans Kalahari Inn Camping which was recommended to us by our German friends Tom and Dagmar.

On the way we see a vehicle with a Spanish number plate ... and sure enough, it also goes there.

So after settling in we head over to their camper for a bit of a talk.

They had driven down on the western side of Africa.

After hearing their stories we are even more convinced that this is not what we want to do to get out of Africa but with the east route more or less blocked with all the troubles in the Islamic states we will have to start looking into that issue a bit deeper

The Spanish travellers mention that a new route is being used which leads through Saudi Arabia.

OK, we will check that out too.

Sunday and Monday are spent with maintenance and lots of PC-work.

Susi surfs around and finds the page of the Botswana Parks which contains the price list.

We had heard horror stories that for vehicles like ours an extra 150 US\$ per day were charged and had found it difficult to believe.

But it is true!

Entry fees per day for vehicles are:

- up to 3.5 Tonnes: 70 Pula (= approx. 7 €)

- between 3.5 and 7 Tonnes: 1000 Pula

- 7 Tonnes and higher: 1500 Pula (= approx. 150 €)

Well, that is definitely beyond what we can afford.

So sadly we have to decide to skip Botswana and its National Parks.

Depending on what we see in the Caprivi Strip we might visit Kasane at the northern end of the Chobe National Park and make day trips from there either with a tour-operator or we rent a small 4WD.

But that will be it.

From there we will head into Zambia and have a bit more time there.

Susi writes to a shipping agent that apparently ships vehicles out of Africa.

We had received his details from another traveller that had his Belgium truck shipped to Walvis Bay.

She gets a replay form the agent and as we plan to be in Walvis Bay soon agrees with him to visit him and show the OKA so he knows what has to be shipped out.

Susi also writes to a Swiss couple that had just arrived back in Switzerland and that had driven the east route for some details on how they got their visas for Ethiopia and South Sudan.

She gets a very quick reply saying that they had the Ethiopia visa done in Switzerland.

This means for us that we will have to send the forms for the visas for both countries to Simon, Ruedi's godchild, so he can order the visas and bring the passports back when he comes for a visit in September.

So one more task for the task list

Susi also gets the info to visit "Wüstenschiff", one of the Africa Forums on the Internet.

She finds some very useful info there from other people which are in the same situation as we are; stuck because the Visamar RoRo ferry does not travel from Alexandria in Egypt to Italy anymore.

The alternative is to drive to Israel and ship to >Italy with the Grimaldi Lines.

This means some more surfing as we have to find out about visas for Israel.

But luckily we have a Swiss passport and apparently don't require a visa.

So that route would theoretically be open for us.

All now depends on getting the visas for Ethiopia and Sudan.

On Tuesday morning we head into Windhoek.

First stop is the Department of Home Affairs to check for the visas.

As there are no free parking spots Ruedi stays in the OKA and Susi checks out the queues.

Luckily at counter 10 there are almost no people and soon she is informed that the visas have been granted but that she has to pay fist.

Pay?

We already paid 80 N\$ each!

Yes, but that was for the application; the visas are 390 N\$ each.

Once we have the passports we see that they have granted us visas for another 2 months.

Great!

This means that we will be able to complete most of the planned trip.

Now as we are flexible with the dates and can book the Etosha National Park .

Cool.

Next is a visit to a pharmacy that Karin, Kai's wife had recommended, where her friend works.

She will be able to advise us on Malaria and what we should do.

We already have Malarone that was given to us in Australia as "the shut after" basically to combat Malaria should we get the symptoms.

Funny enough in Namibia they take it as prophylaxis.

We had already asked in a pharmacy in Keepmanhoop and had been given a Larium-copy but when we read the enclosed instructions we had decided that we better don't take that one

The Malarone-copy we receive in Windhoek is quite expensive too but having Malaria is not funny either and now that we have enough time on our hands we really want to have a good look at the Caprivi Strip and its animals.

Next stop is the Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR) where we get our Etosha National Park bookings done.

We want to visit it in July and feel that it is holiday season!

It is not possible to get the camps in the sequence we want them at the dates that we want.

But at the end we get 4 nights in 3 different camps and are happy.

Then we head back to Kai at the Namib Truck Centre to pay the bill.

Susi tries to pay by Internet banking but has to learn that Namibia is not on the map of global banking (or at least not with NAB

It cannot be selected in the drop-down menu of the countries where payments can be made to and therefore no payments can be made

Luckily we had visited an ATM in town to stock up enough cash for our trip (most service stations do not accept credit cards and one has to pay cash for fuel) and have enough N\$ to pay cash.



By then it is so late in the afternoon so we decided to head back to the Trans Kalahari Inn Caravan Park and stay for another night.

This also gives us the chance of having a meal at their restaurant to try some of their game dishes.

So after an Amarula at the bar (somehow we have to pass the time until the food had been prepared)



Ruedi receives a Cordon Bleu of Zebra and Susi Oryx, Springbok and Eland filet pieces. She agrees with the lady at the bar, the Oryx is also her favourite. To celebrate the extension of our Namibian visas we also order desert:



Coup à la Mozart and Crepe à la Gundel.

On Wednesday, June 22, we leave Windhoek on the C26 towards Walvis Bay. Shortly after the landfill the bitumen ends and we deflate the tyres. Then it is Susi's turn to drive a bit.

But she doesn't get far

As she drives along the OKA seems a bit unstable uphill on the gravel road so Ruedi suggest that she changes to 4WD highs on the next straight stretch. Around the next curve the OKA sags to the side and loses speed.

"Hmmmmm looks like a flat tyre" is Susi's comment.



And she is right.

The right back tyre is a complete mess and cannot be rescued anymore She noticed the problem too late the tyre had already lost the air and the rim had cut the sidewall of the tyre to pieces

Susi is not impressed.

Every time she drives there is an expensive damage the diff on the Namaqua Track, now a tyre not a very lucky driver

Well, it does not help to complain so we start with changing the tyre.

At least it is the louisiest tyre that we have that has been destroyed so here we are lucky.

Out of curiosity Ruedi inspects the destroyed tyre.

He had glued on some rubber junks that had been partially cut off by rocks with SuperGlue and was wondering if the flat tyre had been lost the air because that damage had worsened.

He finds that the valve is completely gone that is strange and there are some stress marks inside of the rim ?????

A closer inspection reveals that whole fixation of the brake calliper is missing. Most likely the safety screw for the calliper fixation was not installed at BAE.

When Susi used the breaks the calliper had been lifted and had sheared off the valve.

This had generated a more or less instant loss of pressure in the tyre.

So Susi can stop feeling guilty because she had no chance to notice the problem quick enough.

Luckily Ruedi carries spares for almost everything so soon the breaks are fixed, the spare tyre is mounted and we can carry on.

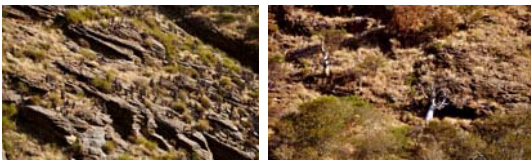
On the way Ruedi tests the breaks and they works beautifully again.

So he has one less problem to worry about.



We continue on and suddenly find ourselves at the top of the **Gamsberg Pass**.

There are a few very nice camping spots up there but we continue on.

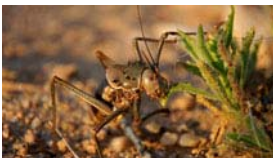


We see some Boabs (or Baobabs as they are called in Africa) and also some strange bush-like plants that seem to grow only on the bare faces of the rocks; as soon as there is soil they cannot be seen.

There is still water flowing in the river which is a bit surprising for the arid country we are in.

Then we reach the turn-off to the C14 and the Kuiseb Pass.

As it is already late afternoon we find ourselves a nice little spot for the night in a dry river bed just 8 km outside of the National Park.



There we find a lot of the large Armoured Bush Crickets we had already seen earlier.

Susi gets the chance to watch them a bit closer while they eat.

They seem to have an extra set of legs to hold the food

[Click here to see a movie on them eating](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 701 KB).

On Thursday we enter the **Namib-Naukluft Park** again.



Then we descend to the **Kuiseb Pass** yes, it is not over a mountain but through a river.

After climbing up again the country gets really flat.
All there is is yellow grass and lots of small birds.
Then even the grass gets scarce

We reach **Walvis Bay** and settle down in the local caravan park.
Then we get in contact with our shipping agent and ask him for his address so we can visit him.
We cannot find the given address in Tracks4Africa, which is a bit surprising as all the streets of Walvis Bay are in it.
Then we realise that we had completely misunderstood him:
He is not based in Walvis Bay, he is based in Breda, Holland, and ships to Walvis Bay!
So much for a "short visit"!

On the other hand this gives us a "free" afternoon for Ruedi to get some things fixed on the OKA and Susi some time in the Internet.
But even though the sun is shining it is a cold and windy day.
We cannot wait for the temperature to rise a bit but it doesn't really rise the max. outside temperature we see for the day is 15.5°C

On Friday morning we want to have a look at the **Walvis Bay Lagoon**.
The flamingos from South Africa migrate to here over winter.



There are a few small flocks but not too many.

Next stop is the new SPAR in town.
It has a very nice selection of articles and even electronic payments are possible

We drive north towards Swakopmund past new developments.
If they continue on building like this it will not take too long and Swakopmund and Walvis Bay will have joined to one large city.

We check in at one of the two caravan parks in town, the smaller Swakopmund River Campsite at the river's mouth.
We can see the waves from our window and are quite happy with the place.
The ablution block does not have warm water and one will have to use the old showers but by now we are used to this things and don't take them too serious anymore.

We get busy with the applications for the visas of Sudan and Ethiopia.
We want to send them to Switzerland for processing before we head north and lose two more weeks.
Time is getting short if one calculates that one application can take up to 6 weeks to be processed we have two visas we would like and then Simon, Ruedi's godchild, will have to bring the passports back mid of September.

When we finish it is already 4 PM.
Quickly we enter the post office in the GPS and let the GPS navigate us to it.
But we cannot see it so we park at the SuperSPAR close by and Susi heads off on foot.
A friendly guard at the parking lot gives her instructions and she really finds the post office but 5 minutes too late, it had just closed.
But it will be open tomorrow Saturday again until 12 AM so no worries.

Susi rushes back and we let the GPS route us to the office of NWR where we want to get some permits for the Welwitschia Drive.
We had read about the strange plants which apparently grow for centuries.
We reach the office 10 minutes before they closed for the weekend and get the permits.

To celebrate the dispatch of the visa applications we decide to have Pizza for dinner.
We find a Napolitana Pizza Restaurant listed in the guide book and have a nice dinner for a good price:
Calamari and a Caesar's Salad for entre then a large Oryx meat pizza with lots of topping on it and good tasting too!
And all for 211 N\$ (= approx. 30 AU\$) including to large glasses of red wine!
With too much food in our bellies we drive back to the caravan park.

Overnight the temperature drops to 3.5°C unusually low for being so close to the ocean

On Saturday we are woken up by condensation water that is dripping from the roof hatch.
That's the down side of being so close to the ocean, the humidity is quite high.

Today we want to have an easy day and explore **Swakopmund**.
We decide to take the bicycles out which turns out to be a bad idea:
Susi's bike has a problem with the oil-hydraulic brakes.
A part has shaken loose and was lost with the result that the oil has drained.
Now poor Ruedi has to fix it.

So Susi take Ruedi's bike and heads to the post office to post the visa applications for Sudan and Ethiopia.



She also wants to get a few pictures of the historic houses in Swakopmund.





The European influence is quite obvious.



Some of the new buildings could well be standing in Germany



Down at the pier there are some fancy apartment buildings too ...



As Susi drives around town she sees that people start gathering on the main road. When she asks she finds out that today carnival is celebrated and that the floats are due any minute. Quickly she drives back to fetch Ruedi but he is in no mood to join her. It had been a pain in the bum to get the air out of the hydraulic system and the bike had tipped over and the oil line had fallen into the sand and and and so she quickly leaves again

Here some pictures of the carnival procession



... it could hardly be any more German

[Click here to see a movie](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 693 KB).



... the Carnival Prince and his escort



... Rex Guido sings his "Fiesta Mexicana" from one of the vehicles, flower power and hippies are remembered (probably more by the parents of the participants)



This year's slogan is "Those were the good old days" even Pete Sampras is remembered!



.... "Aber jetzt ist alles Besser" = "but now all is better" some of the floats are pretty sarcastic



Even the "Männerchor", a very German institution, sings from one of the floats and the hunters walk past in their best finery



... but here it shows that we are in Africa ... with the blacks guiding the horses of an almost whites-only event

In the afternoon while Susi pre-cooks vegetables and makes Cumquat Jam Ruedi has a look at the break warning light. It had been on constantly since we had the break cylinder fixed in Windhoek.

It looks like there is air in the system.

As we have ordered tyres at the Namib Truck Centre they can then have a look at it.

So after a long and busy day we just manage to have a hot shower before the temperature starts dropping rapidly.

By 8 PM we only have 12 °C outside temperature still falling

(When we check the thermometer in the morning we can see that it had actually fallen to 4.5°C)

On Sunday, June 26, we wake up to a warm day.

Already at 6:30 AM the temperature reaches 16 °C.

Then we realise that the ocean is very quiet.

Ahhhh the wind has changed and now comes from the inland bringing warm and dry air.

The humidity outside has dropped to 20%, quite a change to the 55% we had yesterday.

Soon it is time to get rid of the jackets.

We don't mind after 2 days of cold wind.

Then we are on our way to the Welwitschia Plains Drive.

To get there we have to take the C28 that crosses the **Swakop River**.

We are surprised to find a golf course with nice green lawns in the river bed.

There are also still some water holes in the river bed which are just visited by a group of Springboks.

But as soon as we leave the river bed the country turns arid and dry.

Then we reach the border of the Namib-Naukluft Park and the beginning of the drive.

The points of interest are numbered and an information sheet explains what can be seen.

At beacon 1 the behaviour of lichens can be experienced.



Of course we have to try that out.

As soon as the black dry plants get in contact with water they open up and turn grey-green.

Amazing!



We also have a look at plants that grow in the dry river beds.

One of them has leaves like dollar coins and has a similar name too ... but don't ask me about it.



The drive through the moons-cape is very pretty.



We deviate on the D1991 and drive down to the Swakop River.

It still flows a bit.



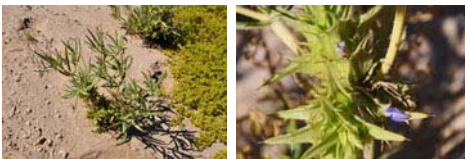
We head back up to the drive and get some more views of the moon-scape.



Then the drive takes us through the Swakop River again but the decent is not as spectacular as the one on the D1991. It is interesting to see that where there is Dolerite there is also grass growing.



In the riverbed Susi finds some flowers



.... some of them are pretty well protected



... some of them are just interesting



Mining activities are well visible. We wonder what they are looking for



We reach the Welwitschias (*Welwitschia mirabilis*) and their inhabitants. The plants really look a bit strange. It looks as if it would have several leathery leaves. But according to the botanists they are the only two leaves that the plant will grow in centuries! These leaves are produced at right angles and continue to grow at a rate of 8-15 cm per year throughout the entire life of the plant. The leaves become shredded into several strap-shaped sections by the wind.



There are female Welwitschia



... and male ones of these really strange plants.



Then we head up to the oldest of them.
It's a female, very large and according to the sign about 1'500 years old



On the way back to the main road we come past some more nice examples of Dolerite.



We stop at an abandoned iron ore mine; there is not much left of the old mine except a hole in the ground and a metal bucket.
It must have been hard work getting the iron ore out by hand



As we scramble around a prospecting crew stops to pick up some equipment that was parked behind the mine the future meets the past
Then we head back into town past some sand dunes.

We decide to stay at the "Mile 4" Caravan Park on the other side of town for the night.

To get there we have to drive through the "shanty town" of Swakopmund.

Well, one cannot call that a shanty town anymore.

It is a well presented small town with many stone houses, some with little gardens.

The only difference to the rest of the town is that here the houses are a bit smaller and don't have views of the ocean.

Otherwise (especially compared with the shanty towns in South Africa!!!) it seems that they are either doing well or the government is taking care of them in a good way

We reach the camp, a large sandy patch with approx. 200 sites.

Even though it is close to the beach an electric fence makes it impossible to go for a walk along the beach.

We fell like in a prison not a tree, not a single plant, a sterile patch of sand.....

We don't like it and decide that tomorrow we will head back to the cosy Swakopmund River Campsite at the river mouth with its grass patch for the tents, the little palm-leaf

fences between the sites even though it is a bit run down for us it is so much friendlier than the other one

But for today it will have to do and we settle down for a drink in the warm afternoon sun.

On Monday morning we pack up and head into town.

Susi would like to get the washing done before we head north.

It is quite difficult to find coin-operated laundrettes in Africa.

And if one finds one most of them wash with cold water which is not to Susi's liking.

Probably due to the many tourists Swakopmund has at least three laundrettes.

We check them out and the third one washes with hot water but they only have one boiler of hot water a day and if one is not there at 7 AM the hot water is all used up for the day

So we give up and postpone the washing to when we are back in Windhoek.

We drive to "our" camping and feel like coming home.

The rest of the day is spent with admin work in front of the PCs (banking, visas, etc. etc.).

It is frustrating how much time we have to spend with pen-pushing especially with the visas for Sudan and Ethiopia and also to find a way to get the OKA out of Africa!

It seems that for the moment there are no ferries except Grimaldi from Israel and possibly a vehicle transport out of Egypt which Susi is chasing.

It also looks like currently there are also no RoRo possibilities. We still hope that the agent in Holland will find a way out.

Well, we will see.

In the afternoon fog builds up and it gets unpleasantly cold with only 13°C.

On Tuesday morning the fog is still present.

So this is the weather the Skeleton Coast is famous for

We leave in northerly direction and come past the many fishing camps long-drop toilets in pairs along the beach the names of the camps indicate how far they are away from Swakopmund 14 miles, 72 miles ...

There are water tanks there but apparently one has to buy the water by the litre at a very high price.



We pass **Wlotzkasbaken**, a small siding with fishing "huts", each of them with its own water tank.

Shortly after we pass a modern desalination plant.

Now we understand why the water is expensive here



Then we spot a wreck of a ship and head there.

A group of locals with their souvenirs come and tell us that it was an Angolan fishing boat that was fishing illegally and was stopped by the police in 2009.

The ship was towed to Walvis Bay but the Angolans came and took it back at night.

The tow rope snapped and the ship was washed ashore.

The story is good



They also ask for your name and quickly they grave your name on nuts with engraved animals on it.



We knew about the nuts and the scheme but we had decided to buy some nuts as presents for our friends and this way support the "artists". At least they try to earn some money somehow and do not just beg.

In **Henties Bay** we stop for fuel, to get maps of the Messum Crater area and ask for the desert elephants at the tourist information centre. Here we learn that the ship wreck is the "Zeila" and that it stranded in 2008 the "guides" were pretty close



We stop at the **White Lady Salt Plain** to have a bit of a look around. People have placed salt crystals for sale along the road.

Here again we see the difference to South Africa: nobody is watching over the goods, there is just a small tin where the money should be placed



Next stop is the **Cape Cross Cape Seal Reserve**. It is a bit smelly very smelly!

[Click here to see a movie on the seals](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 2'834 KB).



There seem to be only female seals with pups present at this time of the year.

According to the info signs the majority of the pups are born around December 10 but there seem to be larger ones and even some quite small ones. Some of the young ones even already go fishing with their mothers

[Click here to see a movie on the pups](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 1'076 KB).



Whatever it is siesta time



There is also a memorial for Diago Cao, who in 1485 visited this area and left a cross.



Soon after Cape Cross we leave the C34 and head west on the D2303. On the way there are still signs of the recent rain falls.

Once we reach the **Messum River** we turn east into the dry river bed. From now on it is off-road for a while



The track in the river bed seems to be used frequently. Sometimes there are many tracks in parallel, sometimes there is even some corrugation!



When the Messum River has water it seems to wash away a fair bit of gravel leaving some very pretty wash-outs or terraces as they call them in the guide book. In the afternoon light the river bed is a real pleasure to drive and the light is perfect as the sun comes from behind.



We find some interesting minerals.



We find a lichen field and play around with the water bottle to watch lichens "unfold".



Some of them have some pretty colours and shapes.



As we drive further up the river bed we reach some more Welwitschia plants. There are many more here than were on the Welwitschia drive and some of them are huge.



In the late afternoon we reach the **Messum Crater View Point** and decide to stay for the night.



Susi even finds some time for a small excursion to look for plants and flowers.



The Messum Crater View Point must be one of the nicer spots where we have spent the night

On Wednesday the sun shining again, no fog, no clouds.
Soon we are on our way.



Again we pass some pretty mountain areas with a lot of golden grass growing all round it.
We wonder how this area looks normally when there have not been such good rains as this year

As we drive we see a car come towards us.
What an event!
Then the vehicle even starts beaming his lights so we stop to see what's up.
It is a government car with two rangers in it.
One of them tells us that he went to Australia last year for a convention in Sydney and Brisbane.
What a coincidence.

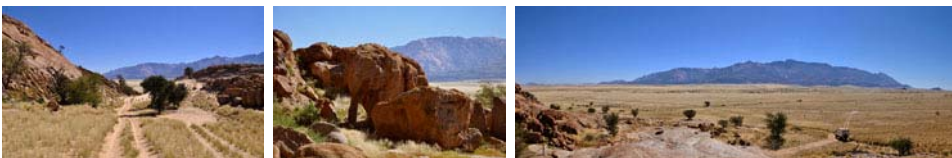
We drive around the **Brandberg Mountain**, the highest mountain in Namibia.
We reach the D2342 and drive west on it for a while.



We stop at an abandoned Mica mine but besides a few flowers



... a gecko and a funny looking insect there is not much to be seen.



At the point where we leave the D2342 and go off-road again we also look for the "Brandenberg Elephant" and after a bit of searching actually find it.



The area is well populated by dragons.



There is also a small well with a bit of water flowing out of it.
Ruedi digs a nice little hole that surprisingly quickly starts filling with water.
The birds soon come for a drink

The track has some nasty pointy rocks so Ruedi has to watch well where he drives.
Suddenly he stops.



There is a Chameleon on the road!
It is rather shy and hides behind the grass every time Susi gets close enough for a photo.

Later on we see dust in front of us.
Wow, a vehicle!



Yes and no it is a wagon drawn by four mules.
The poor things run like crazy and the wagon actually drives with almost 30 km/h.
When we stop for lunch the temperature has reached 30°C very nice.

After crossing the D2359 we spot the first bits of elephant dung but it is dry.



The track takes us along some balancing rock formations that remind us of the "Devil's Marbles" in Australia.



Then we reach the **Ugab River**.

It is dry and the sand is deep and soft.
 We try to find a way along its river bank.
 Eventually the track crosses the river and we get out on foot to explore the possibilities.
 Susi hears a "Go-Away"-Bird calling it is the first time since Karongwe that we hear this bird.
 Is it telling us something?????



We find a way out of the river bed to an old track and decide to try our luck.
 But in the middle of the river Ruedi feels that the OKA is starting to sink in.
 It is now definitely time to lower the tyre pressure to "sand".
 It is a bit too late and we require the help of the sand boards.
 Once on the other side of the river we search for the track but apparently people drive in the river bed.
 We don't like that and decide that we better turn around and look for another track.
 The way back through the river bed with correct tyre pressure does not cause any problems and we settle on the river bank for the night.
 Ruedi actually takes the OKA of the track and parks it on the side of it "just in case some traffic comes through"
 While Ruedi is checking the OKA and its tyres for damages we hear animals breaking through the woods sound like cattle being driven
 Then a cart with three mules in front of it comes down the track in full speed....the mules give what they can.
 The OKA really would have been in its way!!!!!!
 The driver greets as he speeds past.
 A short while later he comes back with a cart full of wood and stops for a chat.



He asks us if we are not afraid of elephants?
 No, we are looking for them!!!
 They are some 15 km further up river further down the river there is a swamp that the elephants are afraid of getting their young through so they stay here until it dries a bit more.
 Well, if that was not really useful information!
 So we will drive up the river and we know that we will get into trouble if we try to pass the swamps.
 We leave the windows open a bit over night just in case the elephants come through one never knows
 After a quiet night without elephants on Thursday morning we wake up to another beautiful morning.
 As soon as the sun is up the temperature climbs from the cool 5.5°C from the night to pleasant 15°C.
 Soon we are on our way looking for elephants.



We drive every track that we can find that leads down to the river but have no success.
 We stop at a well to check if we can cross the river but we decide not to do so.



We find elephants droppings and tracks but no elephants
 We ask people and are guided up the river.



Then we reach **Sorris Sorris** and there we hear that the elephants were here last night but have now turned back down river but on the other side.
 When we stop at the first possible access to the river we hear that the elephants have not yet come back, so they must be between the two small sidings but that area is swamp and we cannot access it.
 By now the temperature has reached more than 30°C and after all the dust we would not mind a bit of "civilization".



So we decide to head back to the **Brandberg White Lady Lodge** and stay there for some info and the comfort of a well-equipped campground: a long warm shower! The hot water is generated in a donkey (a fire heated boiler).

At the reception the lady confirms that the elephants are in the swamps but she also tells us that even they cannot reach them in their safari vehicles.

So all we can do is hope that the elephants come out of the swamp during the night and cross the camp wishful thinking

Even though it was a warm day taking a shower in "open-air" showers in the late afternoon can get a bit fresh so Ruedi fires up the donkey and the water is hot in no time. Bliss!!!

As they have mobile phone reception in the lodge (yes, in the middle of the desert) we decide to catch up with our mails and organisational items like tyres, visas, etc. So we stay put for a day or two.

The elephants have not moved and are still in their camp so we might have to wait a bit longer for them to walk through the camp and please, not during the night when we might not hear them!

On Sunday, July 3, we decide to go and look for the elephants ourselves by foot.

As we more or less know where they are we will have to check out an stretch of approx. 2.8 km along the river for them.



When we reach the first sandy crossing of the Ugab River we see fresh elephant tracks. We check out the area and find branches that the elephant must have ripped off the trees.

They are fresh and only just starting to dry up.

Great!

So we head east along the Ugab River and take every possible track down to the river to check for tracks.



We find a lot of interesting things ... but no elephants



Susi even gets a chance to look at her flowers.

Finally we reach the place where the area starts where we assume that the elephant group is.

Here too we find fresh droppings and very fresh bits of trees.

So we get the GPS, the walkie-talkies, our hats, water and head off.

To be on the safe side we will stay in the rocky area where elephants cannot get to.



We climb from one rocky outcrop to the next one checking the valleys and all possible areas.



The foot prints we find are really fresh and we even find foot prints of the baby elephant that we know is in the group. We are not the only ones looking for the elephants.

People have tried driving up the river bed and got stuck in the treacherous sand.

The sand looks firm but when one puts the shoe on it one sinks in like one would expect from quick sand.



Then we find markings of a bull.

He has left fresh dropping and his urine all over the place so we are really close now and have to be very careful.

As we climb over the last large rocky bit Ruedi spots the elephant.

He is about 500 m away from the river crossing at Souris Souris.

Ruedi also spots some dust just on the other side of the river at Souris Souris.

Quickly we decide to head back to the OKA and drive up there.

We might just catch the bull when he crosses the river.



When we reach the crossing we check for foot prints and find many very fresh prints but not from the bull, from the whole group! They must just have crossed.

As we walk towards the rocks to get some height to look for the elephants we hear branches that are being broken.

Yeah, we found them - in the thicket about 20 to 50 m from our position - sh... damn close!

From our lookout we see that the group is heading towards the crossing.

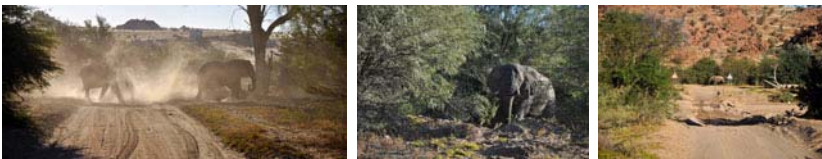
Quickly Ruedi heads back to the OKA while Susi starts walking towards the crossing on foot.



The elephants start crossing the road.

Also the little one is there but his mama does not like Susi being so close so Susi starts walking backwards to the OKA.

[Click here to see a movie of the elephants](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 1'092 KB).



We drive towards the crossing but one of the elephants does not like that at all, trumpets and starts chasing us so we cross the river and watch from over there until the whole group has crossed.

It is quite a spectacle and the people from Souris Souris stand on the hills outside the village and watch too.

How lucky are we!

And we are proud too that we have interpreted the tracks correctly and found the group.

So after this eventful day we drive a bit outside the town and find ourselves a spot for the night.

On Monday morning we continue on south, first on the D2319 and the C35 to **Uis**.



Uis used to have the world's largest open-cast hard-rock tin mine.

But sadly in 1990 they closed the mine down and 2 000 jobs were lost.

Left are a few small mines and a large hole in the ground



From Uis we want to reach the Erongo Conservancy.

We had been warned that the direct road D1930 is still flooded so we decide to try the next one further east, the D2306.

When passing through **Okombahe** we see a large board announcing that the river crossing had been improved with funds from the EU.

The river had a beautiful concrete part in the middle but the recent rains must have made the river bed wider so to reach the concrete one had to drive through a wet sandy part so much for mother nature complying with the planning of the EU

Next we turn east on the D2315.

We had read in the Go! Magazine that this road leads through the **Erongo Conservancy** and if lucky one could catch a glimpse of animals.

But we are unlucky.

We see lots of markings and even a warning sign for elephants but not animals.

Then we reach the bitumen of the C33 it's almost a culture shock: Traffic!

But we survive the short distance before we can turn west past Karibib and then south again onto gravel and into the waste "nothing" of the C32.

We find ourselves a spot in a dry riverbed and set up camp.

Then we see a white woman and a black man approach the vehicle.

She looks and sounds German and asks us if we have a problem?

No, we are just setting up camp for the night.

You cannot do this she replies.

Why not?

It is not safe.

After a bit of a discussion regarding what is safe and what not we find out that she owns the camping a few km away and that times are hard but we don't want to go to the camping so we ask her if we can stay for the night (even if in her eyes it is unsafe) and she agrees.

After the sun sets the temperature starts dropping quickly and over night falls to -2.5°C .

We wonder how cold it will be in Windhoek some 500 m higher up

On Tuesday morning we continue south on the C32 and check out if the **Tsaobis Leopard Park** is really closed sadly it is

Shortly before reaching the C28 we stop and find ourselves right beside a rather large colony of Rock Dassies.

They have a lot of young ones probably due to the good conditions.



Then we head east on the C28 and climb up the **Bossua Pass**.

It is a rather steep pass but still not as steep as the Steegs Hoogte Pass was.



Once one has reached approx. 1700 m above sea level it goes up a bit down a bit up a bit down a bit
The views and the drive are quite nice



..... and there are even some flowers for Susi



On the way we cross a herd of cows with 2 "cowboys".
Then we reach Windhoek and settle down at the Trans Kalahari Inn Camping until our tyres arrive from South Africa.
And this is the end of this journal.

No liability for timeliness, integrity and correctness of this document is accepted.
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