

Mabuasehube: August 2016

Sunday 14th saw us leave Newcastle at 07:30.

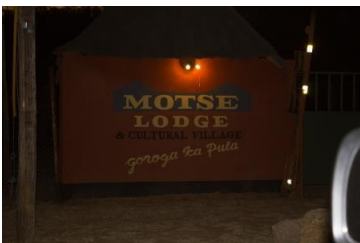


We had planned to be four guys and two vehicles, my Pajero swb with an XT-140 and a friend's 90 with RTT. Unfortunately the Landy broke down before we could leave Newcastle.

OK, not really. Unforeseen medical reasons caused him to cancel, so we were three guys in one vehicle.

After an internet search for a place to stay as near as possible to Skilpadshek, I chose what appeared to be a pleasant, if rustic, B&B in Zeerust. Unfortunately I am in the habit of paying for everything up front, and did so this time too. On our arrival at Africa Unplugged Guest Lodge we were appalled to find that our booking had been forgotten and the state of the place shocked us into silence. We decided to forfeit our booking and crossed the border that afternoon as it was still light.

It was too late to reach the cutline and bush camp. We ended up booking in to the Motse Lodge in Kanye. Rustic but clean and fine for three guys.

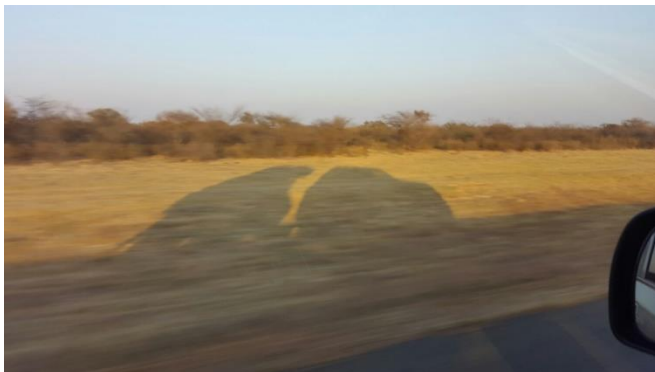


They have a decent bar where we renewed our acquaintance with St Louis.



Their card facility was not functioning so we went in search of a Barclays where we drew Pula. No problems.

Monday 14th we left before the morning rush after refuelling. Cards accepted, no problems.



Refuelled again in Jwaneng, again no problems with cards. Topped up again at Sekoma. The owner, I apologise but I forget his name, let us fill our water tanks from his borehole. As none of us are regular drinkers we had planned to buy beers in Jwaneng but it had slipped our mind. We were directed to a tavern where we were able to stock up with the local brew. Very pleasant it is too.

Following advice that I received on this forum we had decided on this route rather than McCarthy's Rest. What a mistake.



The cutline was terrible, took us almost four hours to do the 130km. Corrugations were so bad that the bracket holder for the gas cylinder broke, even though we travelled at a snail's pace and had deflated to 1,5 bar.



We saw our first animals along this road though.



Finally reached the turn to the South and the road improved although it was fairly sandy. Within minutes we were at the entrance to the park, checked in with ease and off to our site at Mabuasehube Pan where we had booked in for seven nights.



Arriving at our campsite we found a young Dutch couple also setting up camp. After checking their permit it was obvious that they were at the incorrect site although they did not want to accept it (they were booked in to camp 3 at East Gate Entrance and not camp 3 at Mabua Pan). It was getting dark already and we did not want to start our trip with an argument, so we left them to stay (they were booked for two nights). The site is large enough to share and we set up our camp near to the A frame, much to their annoyance. Strangely the next night they did not return. I think they were not mistaken but had decided that Mabua Pan was far better than the entrance camp and as it was late when we arrived, they obviously thought that the site was not booked for that night. All well that ends well though.

We heard lions roar during the night, but they did not sound too close. Later we would have lions walk through the camp at night.

None of us had been to Mabua before but were fired up for sightings after reading all the trip reports on this forum. However the reality is a little different. The game is incredibly scarce although the birds, ground squirrels and mongoose make up for it. I think the National Parks are not doing their bit to maintain the park. The facilities do not appear to have been upgraded/repared for decades. With our visit only two watering hole boreholes appeared to be operational (Mpaya and Lesholoago). This has to have a negative impact on the number of animals in the park. We met fellow forumite Sakkie Stone and his SWAMBO, Denise as they had the site next to us for a few days. What a character and good ambassador for the Eastern Cape and South Africa. Highly knowledgeable, friendly and generous, and a real gent to boot. He shared my opinion but as he has visited a number of times previously he was able to confirm that the park has deteriorated tremendously over the past ten or more years.



We were also well prepared for the expected cold. I had seen a report the week before of -7 temps. Well we did not pack enough summer clothes. The temps were balmy at night and warm to hot during the day. I took a max/min thermometer with and recorded a minimum of 6 degrees and a maximum of 32 degrees over the seven days.

We visited Khiding Pan a number of times over the next week hoping to see Cheetah, but with no luck. We also did not see the leopard that frequents Mabua ablutions. We were fortunate to have very good lion sightings, as well as the birdlife. I think I could return just for the birdlife. The meercat colony was also a disappointment but was probably our fault for not spending long enough to let them get used to us.

I underestimated the fuel that we would use and we had to make a run to Tsabong to refuel and fill up our Jerry cans. Sakkie kindly lent us one of his which enabled us to have a full tank and 40 litres after topping up when we returned. Seeing the condition of the road to Tsabong we decided to change our return trip plans and leave to the South rather than face

the cutline again. While we were in Tsabong we were approached by a hustler who tried to sell us a camel. True story!

This being our first trip to Mabua we were not aware of some unwritten rules which led us into an embarrassing confrontation with a fellow camper. While I am aware of the Zulu culture with regard to approaching a homestead; stop at the entrance and wait for the head of the homestead to send someone to address you and determine the reason for your visit. I was not aware that this also applies to Mabua. Almost every person driving passed our camp would pop in and enquire as to sightings, or just wave and drive through. No problem and no objection from us or other campers. However on one of our game drives one of us developed an urgent need for a No.2 pit stop (No pun intended). We had no spade in the vehicle and park rules only allow you to alight from your vehicle in designated areas. With this in mind we stopped at the first campsite and a mad dash was made to the loo. This resulted in the aforementioned confrontation. If that person is also a member of this forum, once again my apologies. We were honestly not aware of this unwritten rule. We did try to be unobtrusive by parking behind your vehicle and not just barging through your camp to the toilet. He actually walked around the outskirts of your site to get to the loo.

Our last night we shared a braai with a couple from Austria, Alex and Marthina.



Our return via Tsabong and McCarthy's Rest was uneventful. An 18 hour pull, but it was worth it. I would love to return with my Swambo in future, I just need to do some convincing. We arrived in Newcastle at 02:00 on Tuesday 23rd.

The Paj performed faultlessly, with an average fuel consumption of 15,3 Lt/100Km (6,53 Km/Lt). The best being 10,29 and the worst 25,29 Lt/100 Km.

Thanks to all who submit trip reports as it helps one plan. T4A was great and I would recommend it for first timers such as us.

A sample of photos from the trip.











