

Bev & PC – 2012 Africa Safari 7

Northern Mocambique

We left Masasi at first light, around 06.30EAT and headed for the border. The first 40kms is on good tar, then you get the sign that reads 'Unity Bridge' and you are on a gravel road for the next 62 kms. The road is generally good, passing through a number of villages dominated by cashew nut trees. 2kms from the bridge you get onto a beautiful tarred road. Then you see this magnificent structure in the middle of nowhere, funded by the Japanese (who must have been smoking something). The Tanzanian immigration and customs are just before the bridge at Masuguru. 15 minutes we were out of Tanzania and on the Mocambican side - Negomane. That took 30 minutes – most time was taken reading my insurance form – pre-purchased in SA. Before reaching the end of the tar on the Mocambique side we were stopped by traffic police, drivers licence inspected and given instructions to turn right. That we did just after the checkpoint and before the magnificent tar runs out. By 09.00 we cleared the initial villages and stopped for breakfast.

The next 180kms to Mueda was on a track, most of which runs through beautiful woodland and mostly in good state with the odd badly rutted patches through areas that are clay and the odd dust bowl.

Near Gangure the terrain changes and it becomes hilly for around 30kms. There is a check point at Gangure – police and customs – passports and import permit. Then it's down into the valley towards Mueda. It took around 5 hours to get to Mueda from Negomane. From there it's tar to Mocimboa da Praia and the campsite at Chez Natalie – 120kms. The first 80kms is on fairly rough tar and the last 40 is badly potholed. My GPS then led us all round the town, after we'd stopped to draw Meticais (there is no ATM in Mueda), trying to find the campsite. Eventually we retraced our route and found a sign that sent us in the right direction, but you still had to persevere as the road is not obvious. In total it took 10 hrs from Masasi to Mocimboa. There is nothing to attract one to Mocimboa or Chez Natalie. We did however meet a delightful German couple – Georg and Andrea who are on three continent trip – North & South America and Africa. They were headed north, so I'll try getting their travel time to the bridge to get the difference between towing and a single vehicle.

Next morning we did some vegetable shopping while waiting for our tent to dry – very heavy dew overnight - and headed for Pemba Dive and Bush camp. We'd really hoped that once we joined the road south, the conditions would improve. We'd asked Georg about the road and he'd said the first 100kms is not good, but I'd not really paid much attention. Well the first 100kms was horrendous. About 80kms of disintegrated tar then, thankfully, you get onto diversions that are at least marginally better. In places they are rebuilding the road, so there is

evidence that something is being done, but no obvious urgency. The last 80kms to Sunate is mainly good tar and then the 70kms to Pemba is on good tar. The 350kms took 7 hrs.

Pemba Dive and Bush camp is the best camp we've stayed at in the past 2 months. Brenda and Rudi Franck, the owners run a really good show. It is located out of the hassle of Pemba – now exploding as a result of the Oil and gas exploration. As are prices – paid over R100 for 6 apples and a medium size yoghurt. Some consolation, bread is cheap and good. But, Pemba has few redeeming features – an adequate market, good bakery, very overpriced supermarket, and a few good eating places – we had a very good meal at Pemba Dolphin near Wimbi. Kai, the owners' son, does a nature walk that is very informative, particularly about the mangroves. I asked about fishing – the reply was do not waste your money, the place is fished out. The meals at the camp are very good, but pricey – we had a very good steak one evening and calamari on another, but at around R150 a pop, not inexpensive. We spent a week at Pemba and really got the beach bum feel. The sunsets were superb, beer cold, warm sea and warm weather. Who could ask for more?



The road to Nacala was a marginal improvement on what we'd experienced in Moz thus far. There were a few diversions where road work was underway. The 420kms took us just over 7 hours.

Libelulu (dragonfly) is a little way out of the hustle of Nacala. The campsite is tiny and, despite having booked, we found an Australian couple camping in the area best suited for our trailer. PJ, who with her partner Ian own the place, used her charm to get the Ausies to move enough

to accommodate both vehicles. They were leaving the next morning, so we were not too concerned. Not often we meet fellow travelers that you cannot get an immediate rapport going with, but this couple was different. The setting is splendid overlooking the bay. Nacala is one of the deepest natural harbours in Africa – one evening a ship, carrying mainly containers steamed past on her way to the harbour. The town is unremarkable, but we found a shop that sold tonic (and all other alcohol from around the world) and there is a bakery not far from the lodge. The humpback whales arrived while we were there. Ian said they were a bit late this year, but it was lovely listening to them blowing and watching them move about in the bay. They come into the bay to train their calves. There is a lovely beach at the bottom of the hill – about 105 steps from the restaurant. A good place for snorkeling and this is also where Ian takes his clients out on dives – they run a diving school at the lodge. On our third and final evening we had dinner at the lodge – excellent.



Instead of staying on the island we decided to take a day trip to Ilha de Mocambique. It's about 120kms (1.5hrs) from Nacala along a good tar road. We looked at the only camping available on the mainland side. It looked decidedly 'iffy', so were pleased we decided on this option. The 3km causeway connecting the island to the mainland is very impressive – you have to watch oncoming traffic as it is single lane with escape points. The biggest problems are the cyclist and motor cyclists – they just keep coming. There is a toll of M20, payable on leaving the island. The significance of the island is that it was the capital of Mocambique under Portuguese occupation until late 19th century when the decision to move to Laurenco Marques (Maputo) was made. The chapel built in 1522 is the oldest western style building in the southern hemisphere. We paid for the tours of the three most significant museums on the island. Our guide, Abdul was

excellent. He knew his stuff, had a delightful sense of humour and a source of all kinds of information about the island. Unfortunately the Palace is closed for renovation, but the fort (Fortaleza de Sao Sebastiao built between 1546 and 1583) is a very impressive building and they are doing some great restoration work. The most significant right now being the restoration of the water collection system. All collected water ends up in a tank 22x16x5m. While the fort was in use, this sustained around 2000 people – mainly soldiers. Now the water is used to supplement the island supply. Ilha is certainly worth visiting. Whether its worth staying on the island is debatable. Within the fort precinct is a chapel (Capela da Nossa Senhora Baluarte, built in 1522, it is probably the oldest western building in the southern hemisphere – and in still remarkably good condition.



From Nacala we to Nampula mainly with the intention of stocking up our supplies at Shoprite. We did find the sign, but there was no shop – it burnt down 9 months ago. There is no other information on shopping in our Bradt guide nor on T4A, so we headed out to find accommodation and hopefully get some advice on where to shop. We ended up at Complex Touristico Montes Nairucu, a farm some 15kms out of town. Run by Manuel Ferreira, he was really helpful and after a lovely lunch headed back to town. Our shopping done we treated ourselves to a night in the lodge although there are really decent camping facilities available.

The food is really good and reasonably priced. After breakfast we left at around 07h00 hoping to get as far as Quielimane anticipating some really tough sections. The first 50kms out of Nampula is being rebuilt and it was slow going. Thereafter there are potholes for about another 50 kms. Then we were on the best road we'd encountered thus far in Mocambique. Just before Mocuba you encounter another section of road that is being rebuilt, there is a diversion of 20kms, 10 of which should be open in a couple of months. The final 10 will take some time.

We'd made such good time that we decided to head for the Zambezi and Cua Cua Lodge. We made this in good time and set up camp with the temperature hovering around 36'C – next to our Australian 'friends'. A warm farewell to northern Mocambique - indeed.