

Bev & PC – 2012 Africa Safari 6

Udzungwa, Dar es Salaam and Kilwa

We arrived at Rivervalley from Ruaha to a campsite that was overflowing.

A local community organization was running HIV/Aids awareness training for participants between the ages of 12 and 25, there were people on the Swahili training programme, two other South African couples and any number of others. We claimed a spot in the corner very close to the Dance for Life group. It turned out to be a fascinating evening. There was entertainment of the highest caliber. These youngsters had an absolute ball. I'm not sure what time the party finished, suffice to say we were in bed, fast asleep before it ended. The next morning the big clean-up was very efficiently handled, and we left before their transport arrived.



Hondo Hondo Lodge near the Udzungwa National Park was our next stop. The road is generally good tar, but the traffic is dominated by heavy vehicles (mainly fuel tankers) and buses with kamikaze drivers. There is a tricky section through the Udzungwa mountains with a number of broken down trucks. Once you turn off the Great North Road, the drive to Kilombero is dominated by cane fields. The last 24kms to Hondo Hondo is on a very bad dirt road through densely populated villages. The campsite is adequate, but getting a trailer in there proved to be rather tricky. It is scenically stunning with this densely forested mountain as a backdrop. A guided bird walk in the morning was well worth the effort. A few firsts – the blue spotted dove being the highlight. The dinner at the lodge on our second and final night was very good and reasonably priced. Unfortunately they either lost control of their beer stock or forgot to pack the fridge, so a lack of cold beer spoilt it a bit. To get the most out of this area, it would be best

to arrange a two or three day hike as there are numerous unique birds and monkeys in the mountains. There are elephant spoor aplenty and my bird guide told me that the villagers had killed an elephant over the weekend. Very sad.



The 360kms to Dar took 8 hours. The first 310kms took 5 hours. The last 50k's the balance. A combination of congestion and waiting for over 1 hour to board the ferry to our campsite at Mikadi. It is a pleasant enough site, but the water available is pretty close to being straight from

the sea. We had two meals in the restaurant and they were both good – the curries and fish and chips being outstanding and the prices are reasonable. I would certainly try Kipepeo if in that part of the world again. I got the Pajero serviced – cost about the same as in SA, but the mix between labour and part prices very different. We did a retail fix – there is a good shopping centre just off the Bagamoyo road with a well stocked Shoprite. Refilled our Cadac cylinder at Chuki's in the centre of town – takes about 1 hour and had a slow puncture repaired – somewhere around Mbeya I picked up a nail. Dar is not an easy place to get around, so allow plenty time to get from one place to another. The waiting time at the ferry varies from more than 1 hour to 30 minutes in off-peak times.



The road to Kilwa is good tar other than a 60km stretch that is under construction just south of the Rufuji River. Around 20kms has been completed, but the rest is really bad. We camped at Kilwa Seaview Resort. The place is a bit tired, but the shower and toilet worked. There are 3 Kilwas – Kilwa Kivinje (Kilwa of Casuarina Trees), Kilwa Masoko (Kilwa of the Market) where we stayed and Kilwa Kisiwani (Kilwa of the Island). We found little evidence of a market in Masoko – not sure whether the fact that it was Ramadaan meant that there were only oranges on sale. The only ATM does not accept Visa or Mastercard simply reinforcing the perception that this is

no market town. The beaches are dirty and you cannot swim without shoes as the coral comes close to the shoreline.

Kilwa Kisiwani is about 2 kms offshore and seven of us staying at the lodge went across for the tour of the island (\$30pp plus Ts27 000 entrance fee for non-residents). We got taken across in a motor boat. At one time the whole eastern seaboard was dominated by Arab traders – slaves, ivory and gold – and Kilwa Kisiwani was, at its height – the most important trading centre on the coast. It was founded around 975AD and reached its peak in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It has links with Zimbabwe – the source of most of the gold. At that time it boasted sub-Saharan Africa's largest stone building and mosque. The arrival of the Portuguese in late fifteenth century probably started the decline of the island state. Today all one sees are the ruins of this once prosperous island state. People still live on the island and a number of the wells established by the Arabs are still in use today. The tour lasts about 2 hours and is well worth the money and the effort. There is ongoing restoration work and fascinating to see how they are trying to replicate the build techniques used in the original building. The trip back is by dhow – unfortunately there was so little wind that we had to be rowed back most of the way. Is Kilwa worth visiting? Yes, but only for the ruins. We did meet two people at Mikadi who'd just returned and they said the fishing was very good.





After two days in Kilwa it was time to take leave of Tanzania and take on the drive to Mocambique via the Unity bridge across the Ruvuma River. It was a wet departure from Kilwa – the first rain we’d seen in almost two months of traveling in the tropics. The road to Lindi was mainly good tar with a couple of diversions for repairs. Lindi has ATM’s and we refueled. Masasi is about 130kms from Lindi and we got there about 15.30 and then set about trying to find a place to stay. We settled on the Holiday Motel in the main road – clean, but in need of lots of tlc. A meal of ugali, kuku and vegetables – not best prepared Tanzanian food I’d eaten and we were ready for bed. At Ts42 000 (R230) for dinner, bed and 3 kilis we could not gripe.

